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THE GREAT WORD

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THE GREAT WORD

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE MYSTERY PLAY	7
II. THE BIRTH OF LOVE	16
III. INFINITY, IMMORTALITY, AND LOVE	25
IV. THE VISION OF THE IMMORTAL .	33
V. THE GREAT ADVENTURE	41
VI. THE MYSTERY OF PERSONALITY .	50
VII. LOVE AND WORK	60
VIII. THE APPEAL OF LOVE	68
IX. THE SILENCES OF LOVE	76
X. DAY UNTO DAY UTTERETH SPEECH	88
XI. LOVE'S SECOND SIGHT	97
XII. THE STEEP ASCENT	106
XIII. THE CREDIBILITY OF LOVE . .	116
XIV. THE ULTIMATE COMPANIONSHIP	127
XV. THE PROPHECY OF LOVE	136

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVI. THE INTIMATIONS OF LOVE . .	144
XVII. THE ART OF LOVE	153
XVIII. LOVE AND LAW	164
XIX. THE INFINITE IN THE FINITE .	174
XX. THE EXPECTATION OF LOVE .	184
XXI. THE HIGHEST SERVICE OF LOVE	192

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERY PLAY

IN the beginning there was Light; a torch held aloft that the form and shape of things might be seen, and their uses; and in the first brightness, filling the void, the slow, sublime stirring of the seeds of which worlds were to be the fruit; the silent ordering of stars in their places, and the unrolling of the curtain of night shutting out the splendour of the day and making a quiet space of darkness for the coming of the stars. So the stage was set for the drama of life and for the man and woman who were to play it; sometimes turning all its rich humours into sparkling comedy; some-

The Great Word

times rendering all its myriad shades of feeling in a monotony of weariness and disillusion; sometimes driving all its tremendous forces tumultuously on to tragic ends. A little time of learning the mysteries of the stage; a little time of learning how to play one's part; a little time of action, great or small; a little time for memory; and then other actors, a new audience, and silence!

Meantime the stage remains vast beyond the reach of thought, majestic or beautiful beyond the touch of art; itself part of the drama which in continuous acts is played by vanishing generations of actors to the slow, sad music of mortality. They come and go, the men and women who wear the masks of comedy or tragedy, whose breath sounds the music or discord of speech in manifold tones

The Mystery Play

and words; but the clouds that curtain the stage, and the hills that form its background, and the glitter of stars that light it keep their ancient form, and their ancient silence remains inviolate.

Is it but a moving show of vanishing figures, this mystery play of life, or has it some strange, sweet meaning, full of pathos and beauty, spoken in a hundred languages from one deep heart? Every actor has his own speech, but there is something held in common which interprets every man's language to his fellow. There are myriad differences of expression, but there is one great experience through which all are passing and which each strives to understand and to put into words. Every man plays what pleases him, for they who think their parts are set for them do not

The Great Word

see how voice, gesture, and bearing conspire to commit them to the rôles they take. From out the vast range of parts each man elects his part and plays it well or ill as pleases him, and always with the haunting consciousness that the play is at bottom an eternal reality and that what he seems to be he is; that the players speak their lines and go off the stage and are, for the most part, speedily forgotten; but that somehow, somewhere on another stage, the play goes on and each man takes the part which he has chosen and becomes at last that which he would be. The stage is never without the witness of this haunting consciousness of reality, this sense of something permanent behind the shifting scenes, this prevision of hidden relation between the man and the part he plays; and of a deeper and

The Mystery Play

more mysterious drama, not understood, in which each has his place and into which all parts are fitted at last.

There are hours when the play seems very noble and majestic and the lines have a stately cadence, full of intimations of something divine slowly and sublimely speaking through words of human making; there are other hours when the play sinks to the level of low comedy and of coarse farce; and there are still other times when the stage echoes to "mere sound and fury, signifying nothing;" and yet in farce, comedy, and tragedy some note is always sounded from beyond the bounds of the action, and in the most frivolous moment the piece suddenly turns to tragedy.

There are countless books of the play, each with its own account of the plot and the parts, its description of

The Great Word

the stage and the scenes, its story of the making of the drama ; and he who reads finds some truth in each, some insight into the meaning of the acts, some hint concerning the shaping and movements of the parts ; but nowhere is the mystery of the play dispelled, nowhere is its ultimate issue revealed.

Clouds and darkness, the rush of storms among the hills, the roar of tossing seas, the tumult of conflicting winds, envelop the stage or roll their deep tones over it ; and are themselves part of the mystery. The curtain rises and falls continually ; there are laughter, outcries, tears, passionate tones wild with anguish, voices sweet with all peace, thunders of applause ; but the final scene is never disclosed, the curtain is never rung up on the last act.

The actors in this mystery play are

The Mystery Play

always two: the man and the woman. Each plays many parts, there are countless rôles, and manifold plots run side by side or merge in one dramatic climax. There are moments when these two vanish from the stage or are lost in the masks they wear; and the stage is given over to fighters, leaders, thinkers, scholars, masters of affairs, seekers after truth, fame, adventure, fortune; but always at the heart of the play and investing it with a meaning deeper than all vocations are the man and the woman, the only original forces on the stage; in whose natures, not in whose vocations, are the roots of the comedy and the tragedy. They wear a thousand masks and are disguised by fashions beyond number; but no thrill comes, there is no stir of imagination, no hint of the vaster drama, until the heart of

The Great Word

the man and the woman suddenly charge with elemental power the various speech they use, and through all disguises the original personality is disclosed. A thousand times the play runs out in minor parts and subordinate plots and takes on the monotony of mere function and form and task ; and then suddenly, behold, the man and woman emerge again and the lines flash with contending humours or turn to poetry or sink to the deepest levels of tragedy. Vocations, occupations, uses domestic and public of all sorts, places, services, careers, are the mere dressing of the parts ; when the word is spoken which “ leaps immortal from out the painted pageantry ” it is the voice of the man and woman which speaks. They hide behind a thousand parts and are concerned in a thousand plots and wear

The Mystery Play

disguises as various as their tastes, their interests, their ambitions; but the interest of the play rests ultimately and solely in them, not in their rôles; and their passions, qualities, and natures are the stuff of which its immortal substance is woven. The deeper their differences of temperament, the more profound and definite the difference of temperament and trait between them, the richer and fuller the play of the forces that divide them the one from the other, the more will they bring to the mystery play, the deeper will be its interest, the more expressive its lines of the ultimate meanings of life.

CHAPTER II

THE BIRTH OF LOVE

IN far-off space in a far-off age a god, so the legend runs, was making a piece of earth for men to live on. For uncounted centuries he had dreamed of the hour when the divine power that was in him should flow out and fashion something as beautiful as his thoughts; upon which he could rest his eyes, which saw only the emptiness of space; a great reality which should issue from him and yet be no longer a part of him; something he could brood over and build upon; which should give him the joy of contrast and opposition, the interest of responsibility, the

The Birth of Love

delight of ownership. For this god had lived for innumerable ages in solitude, in the pure ether, disturbed by no sound, approached by no swift or halting feet, companioned by no fellow, challenged by no foe. Remote, isolated, encompassed by unspeakable sublimity and loneliness, in the heart of an uncreated universe, he had meditated and dreamed through æons of which no record remained; for there was none beside himself to keep count of eternity; and for him, because there was no action, there was no memory.

No sun made his day glorious and no splendour of stars lay across the heavens at night like the trail of a vanished day; no earth swept through space amid other worlds in rhythmic harmony of motion; no voices of men rose in appeal and no

The Great Word

voices of women in praise and prayer ; and the silence was unbroken by any cry of children from bound to bound. Through all the vast range and stretch of space the stillness of an unborn universe reigned, and the solitude was as vast and awful as the unsown fields of space which it encompassed. The god was silent and motionless in the heart of the stillness ; for he was in a dream full of divine visions of the things that were to be. As yet he knew not himself, nor had any true sense of his power come to him. All things were within his reach, but he had never put forth his hand to take, to build, or to destroy. He had meditated and dreamed, but he had never acted, and the joy and power and fertility of divinity were not his ; for he had yet to live.

The Birth of Love

And as he meditated and dreamed, the solitude became more appalling and the loneliness more unbearable, until he could no longer bear the burden of thought without action; the pain of repression, of power unused, of a nature undeveloped, of thought without speech, was too great for his spirit, and through his divine nature there ran the tremors, the forebodings, the premonitions of coming birth; for the god was emerging from the shadows of dreams and stood on the verge of life, and all its tremendous possibilities were stirring him. And he said to himself, "I will ease the pain of thought by action. I will create a world." And in a far-off stretch of space he created a world, and made it vast and majestic as a temple; but there were no worshippers at the shrine, and still the

The Great Word

loneliness was unbroken. Then he took the matter of which the world was made, and sowed it deep with the seeds of beauty, so that out of its hidden recesses exquisite shapes arose, and the air was sweet with the glances and the breath of flowers; and the god gave a great sigh of content.

But still silence reigned, and the loneliness of the new earth smote the god and made him aware afresh of his solitude ; for there was no one to understand his work, to use it or to be grateful for it. Then, in feverish haste, the god made men, saying to himself: " They surely will comprehend and companion me." And over the face of the earth men appeared and built their homes and plied their trades and multiplied; and some worshipped and some

The Birth of Love

cursed, but none understood; and the loneliness of the god was deeper than before and the burden of it was greater than he could bear. He had put forth his power and created, and the earth gave him back his thought in a beautiful and convincing reality; and he had made man, and man saw something of the wonder in which he lived and built shrines to the invisible maker of it; but no one shared the thoughts and burdens of the god, nor did any voice speak his language. The power in him had gone forth and realised itself in creative activity, but the heart in him remained silent and was hid in mystery, so that he understood not himself nor divined where his divinity lay.

Then on a radiant morning — so the legend runs — a goddess saw the world, that it was fair and sweet in

The Great Word

the light ; and, being as yet unvexed with emotion and untroubled with the deep things of the divine life, she passed through space, and set her foot on the edges of the earth, and ran swiftly through a great wood, and came upon a wide meadow in which flowers gleamed as the stars in heaven, and the air was full of the breath of budding things and of the desire for life stirring in the roots of the earth. And through the veins of the goddess there ran a tremor as if some divine event were at hand, and her heart was swept like a sea that is lifted in surges, and the soul in her seemed to struggle for space and light and air ; for her whole nature was swept toward blossoming and fruitfulness.

And when she lifted her eyes in that mysterious and wonderful mo-

The Birth of Love

ment of her birth into conscious divinity, the eyes of the god were looking into hers; and they both saw and understood and were as one in the rapture and revelation of the spring morning in the fertile earth. For the heart of the god went out of him into the keeping of the goddess, and his sleeping spirit awoke in the morning light of love, and he lived at last after all those centuries of loneliness. For not even the gods live until they put forth their power, and the divine in gods and men is realised only when the heart pours forth its sweetness, surrenders itself in order to find itself; and the spirit comes to self-knowledge and the fulness of life only when it meets its fellow and the two are made one in that lavish giving of self which is self-realisation, and in that fellowship

The Great Word

and comprehension which are perfect self-expression. For life fulfils itself in love, and in loving becomes divine and immortal.

CHAPTER III

INFINITY, IMMORTALITY, AND LOVE

AND then, so the legend runs, these immortal lovers found not only the secret of joy but of life. Through uncounted ages they had thought about life, probed it, searched it, penetrated it by a thousand paths; now, at last, they lived. The slumbering divinity within them awoke; they were enveloped in a flood of light; all manner of half-understood things became clear; up from the depths of being countless springs gushed forth and fertilised them; and with a passion of energy, born of their swift

The Great Word

discernment of the unfulfilled power hidden in their souls, they poured out their creative power like a flood. Through all the secret places of their spirit swept the imperious impulse to surrender, to give the divinest that was in them. Their happiness radiated like the benignant glow of a flame vast enough to warm the world. It searched and lighted every hidden and secret place; it sank into the earth, and sent a thrill through the roots of things great and small concealed in the darkness; it filled the air as with a finer ether, and the breath of it became a caress that drew every delicate and beautiful thing out of its hiding; and through the stars it shone with a soft and kindling radiance as if the beauty of the invisible heavens had passed into the arching sky.

But it was not alone the silent fil-

Infinity, Immortality, and Love

tration of the divine nature that set all the pulses of life and joy beating in the new earth; it was also the shaping thought seeking in every man the sources of life that it might fill them, and the passionate love eager to share with all the fulfilment and function of the divine nature come at last to a knowledge of itself and to the possession of its own.

The lovers went about the earth, and as they passed the world grew beautiful about them, and that which lay in their hearts formed a language for itself in the colour of flowers and the songs of birds, in voices soft with all gentleness and rich with all the deeper meanings of things, in fields which overflowed with fertility and flung waves of grain to the very edges of the woods and far up the mountain sides, in forests which spread their vast

The Great Word

foliage like a protecting shield over
brooks vocal with the peace of undis-
covered springs and pure with the
innocence of virgin depths of shade.

As they passed, the lovers looked
at men and found them burdened with
care and bent under toil and encom-
passed with strange fears; and they
gave them strength for labour, and
security from anxiety, and peace amid
their struggles; and men became as
happy children whom the gods shielded
from all harm and protected from all
danger; but as yet they knew not they
were men, with the joys and the an-
guish and the bliss of love.

And when the lovers saw how fair
the world was, and how abundant were
its harvests, and how sweet was the lot
of man without thought of the morrow
or the poignant bliss of the stirring of
the soul within them, they were con-

Infinity, Immortality, and Love

tent and rested from their labours; and the blossoming world was a bower of delight to them. And the years passed like a shadow over the face of the sun, and men had no history; for they were children of the day and knew not the vastness and mystery that enfolded them. And still love grew deeper and more tender between the immortals, and they had no speech for it; and their happiness, which stirred the earth with flooding life, and poured light through the wide arch of heaven, had no echo in the souls of men. Then the longing for speech became a pain to the lovers, and they knew that something was held back which might be given; that something of the divine power within remained still to be put forth in order that men might understand and in understanding become akin with themselves; for a zone of silence lay

The Great Word

between the immortals and the happy children whom they had created.

So on a radiant morning they touched the spirits of men with a new power of comprehension, and love entered into the hearts of all that bore the human image ; and suddenly the universe swept into view, and men knew that they were the children of the gods ; for within the mortal mind, as in a richly carven lamp, the light of the divine shone forth and men looked into one another's faces and understood whence they had come and whither they were going, and the awe and wonder of it fell on their souls. The lovers knew also that love alone had been lacking, and that with the gift of love there had come to men the knowledge of infinity and immortality ; so that they had power at last to enter into

Infinity, Immortality, and Love

fellowship with the immortal lovers who had builded the earth and made it a garden of delight to the eye. For there is no word for infinity and immortality in any language, divine or human, save the word love; for nothing save love has compass enough to hold and to express the life of the gods. For its fulfilment love needs the limitless range of eternity and the boundless vastness of infinity. Amid the things that perish it knows itself imperishable, and in a world of limitation it knows that it is illimitable. As it pours itself out in utter surrender it fills the springs, that it may have more to bestow; as it passes over the bounds which confine and baffle it, the ardour for a vaster range of life and speech and action lifts it on stronger wings for a farther flight. Alone in a

The Great Word

perishing earth it abides, untouched by time and change and decay ; alone in a life of limitation it knows that it is free to compass all things, to survive all mutation, and to escape death by the power of its immortality.

CHAPTER IV

THE VISION OF THE IMMORTAL

THE dramatists and novelists have often vividly conceived of love as a sudden and overpowering passion, a kind of divine possession of the senses and the emotions, an instantaneous blooming of all the finer hidden resources of the nature. The earth is cold and bare; not a green thing shows itself anywhere; suddenly, without a note of warning, the sun rests on the soil, and, behold! out of the depths there blooms a flower of ravishing beauty. In Dushyanta, in Romeo, in Richard Feverel, who may stand for the countless multitude of lovers since time began,

The Great Word

this miracle is wrought with such swiftness that in an instant all the vagrant impulses flow tumultuously to one end, all the forces of passion, emotion, will, move harmoniously to one goal, the whole nature, with its secret wealth of resources, emerges into the light, and becomes luminous with aspiration, devotion, adoration. There is, in all the range of vital expression, nothing more appealing and divinely suggestive of the ultimate capacities of the soul for companionship and comprehension than these sudden unclosings of the eyes to the vision of the loveliness of the soul, these sudden surrenders to the revelation of the immortal affinities of spirit with spirit.

Like the Days in Emerson's poem, we are all masked in this strange journey of life; our immortality is

The Vision of the Immortal

hidden by all manner of garments of mortality, and we move along the highway like perishing apparitions. The stars from their serene heights seem to look down pitifully on our weary marches, although we name and measure and weigh them; the earth, which is to call us to itself in the end, seems to smile on our few and broken years, although we master its forces and comprehend its uses and make scales strong enough to weigh its mountains and delicate enough to weigh its dust. And we forget, in the haste of our journey and the ever-thinning ranks of those with whom we move, that we are of royal birth, and that our immortality is only partially hidden by the occupations and possessions with which we concern ourselves.

Then, suddenly, the man looks up

The Great Word

as he moves in the ranks, and his eye rests on the woman, and, like a flash of light on a flower, he sees the loveliness of her spirit behind the mask she wears, and knows that he is in the presence of immortality. It is this sudden recognition of spirit by spirit which makes the eternal romance of life; the disclosure that the king is hidden behind the workman's garb, and the queen within the peasant's dress; that the familiar landscape is a bit of fairyland, and the commonest things have a touch of magic on them. Dushyanta is hunting in the woods in which all the Rajahs have hunted before him, so that if there were a race memory every tree would be familiar to him and every passage through the forest an ancient pathway; and he looks up and there stands Sakuntala, and,

The Vision of the Immortal

behold, the old world of routine and work and care has vanished, and a new heaven and earth have descended wherein dwelleth beauty alone; for the immortal has suddenly shone upon him from out the obscurity of the mortal. Romeo wanders careless and empty-hearted among maskers, and suddenly, like a star rising splendid above the horizon, Juliet is beside him and his life is at the flood, let the tide carry him whither it may. On the sweet summer day Richard Feverel floats down the quiet English river full to its soft and fragrant edges, wondering in his heart of youth what all this tender beauty means, and there, on the bank, stands Lucy, "at the founts of the world," all the passion of the woman's soul sleeping in her eyes: "The little skylark went up above her,

The Great Word

all song, to the smooth southern cloud lying along the blue; from a dewy copse standing dark over her nodding hat the blackbird fluted, calling to her with thrice mellow note; the kingfisher flashed emerald out of green osiers; a bow-winged heron travelled aloft, seeking solitude; a boat slipped toward her containing a dreamy youth;" and the day has found its meaning and the landscape its interpretation. So, to the most humble as to the children of genius come the inspirations that make us aware of our immortality.

The tragedy of love is the fading of the vision, the slow, sad return of the common day, the putting on of the old discarded garments of mortality; the triumph of love is the gradual, complete, convincing revelation of the immortal which follows

The Vision of the Immortal

the first blinding disclosure ; the full, sweet, fruitful ripening after the glow and intoxication of the spring morning. Will Ferdinand still find his world in Miranda's eyes when the island has dropped below the horizon? will Orlando still find the light of life in Rosalind's free and radiant nature when the Forest of Arden has become like a mirage in the far distance?

The artist deals with all manner of crude materials, but he knows what he can evoke from them, and in every bit of the material in his hand he discerns the immortal potencies of beauty. The lover, who is the greatest of all artists, is not confused or blinded by the imperfections which perfection wears in this world, nor by the disguises behind which the ultimate and supreme tenderness

The Great Word

hides itself. He steadily looks at the immortal in the mortal and believes and waits and cherishes ; and as the years go by, the shyness of the soul wears off in the presence of that devout comprehension, that steady idealisation, which all great love is, and there comes at last the most beautiful of all visions of the divine in this world of ours : the living together in immortal fellowship of two human spirits surrounded by change and decay and death, but intrenched beyond their reach in imperishable love.

CHAPTER V

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

THERE is an old saying which declares that it is the unexpected that always happens. This phrase not only bears the inscription of long experience, as do all those proverbs which form a universal currency of popular wisdom ; it is also the expression of an instinct deep in the hearts of men. The revolt of the aspiring against low and near aims, of the imaginative and creative against accepted forms, of the free-hearted and free-minded against the pressure of conventions that cut into the soul, are the perpetual protest of the spirit of the race against the limi-

The Great Word

tations of condition and circumstance, the perpetual affirmation of its illimitable possibilities of growth. The vague unrest which pervades society in its most comfortable conditions is significant, not of sterile restlessness, but of the inability of men with capacity for the infinite to rest content with the best the finite can offer them. In all the range of experience nothing quite touches the height of anticipation, quite fulfils the ultimate hope; there is always something left in the heart and mind which is not met by the largest and happiest success. To the sceptic like Renan and to the believer like Browning the world in its most enchanting hours is only a hospitable inn, from which the traveller goes with the morning.

The biography of man which we

The Great Adventure

call history is a great story of adventure ; in unforeseen happenings, in the sudden gathering of perils, in the glorious chances of fortune, the "Thousand and One Nights," "Monte Cristo," and "The Three Musketeers" are faint transcriptions of the pages in which the manifold adventures of the race are written. Neither in their own natures nor in their conditions is there any hope of inaction for men ; the inward impulse and the outward necessity alike compel the taking of risks, the facing of danger, the setting of the face toward the undiscovered country. Over the drowsiest age a sudden stir of hope or fear passes like a breath from the sea, and once more the burdens are lifted and the traveller fares on in the great quest ; in the seclusion of gardens of delight, on the silence of

The Great Word

the golden summer afternoon, a sudden trumpet peals, and there is a swift buckling on of armour and a pathetic clamour of farewells.

The thirst for adventure is no idle revolt against work and routine and the duties of the hour ; it is the impulse of the free spirit spreading its wings for a flight which is its ultimate destiny. For the soul was not made for drudgery, nor were the hands shaped for mere toil ; men work that they may attain that mastery in which there is freedom. The reaction against the hard fact is not the distaste of the sluggish for a task that must be performed ; it is the refusal of the imagination to arrest its glance at the very point where the actual predicts and affirms the ideal. The rigidity and hardness of life are part of the method of a great education,

The Great Adventure

or they are part of a system of brutal and unintelligent tyranny ; suffering is either a noble discipline or a wilful torture of the helpless. Those who believe in the best hopes of the soul revolt against the "tyranny of the fact" by the very vitality of their faith. The old stories of romance and adventure which the earliest men and women told one another in the far beginnings of history were not idle tales ; they are part of the spiritual biography of the race ; the record of its perpetual excursions beyond the narrow world of the day into the larger world of which it is so marvellous a gateway.

At heart all men and women are romantic and adventurous ; in the most commonplace minds there is some thrill of expectation, some hope of the unforeseen. In the most

The Great Word

monotonous conditions there sleep and wake at times the feeling of environing mystery, the sense of unreality which often touches what we call the real, and in an instant it becomes the mere setting of a scene soon to be shifted; mere paint and pasteboard and unsubstantial appearance in contrast with the imperishable soul which acts its part against that fragile and shifting background. In the dullest age of what is miscalled realism the unextinguishable passion for romance sleeps only to open its eyes on new wonders; for the possibilities of the great adventure which we call life are illimitable.

In these later years science itself, the searching study of the facts of the world, has become a more marvellous fortune-teller than the most imaginative of the myth-makers. In

The Great Adventure

its vision there is no more an arid stretch of dead matter, but a living universe, through which incalculable forces play more swiftly than thought, and wait to match man's subtlest imagination with an energy to do its bidding more elusive than thought; forces which bind the continents by invisible currents in the flowing streams of air and make speech audible across half a world. The great adventurer has dreamed no dream more marvellous than what he calls the reality of his existence.

On such a journey through such a world, where all visible things are perishable while the invisible are eternal, the dream of love is the divinest reality. The first glamour, the magic of the golden hour of discovery, is but the prophetic beginning of the romance which gathers sweet-

The Great Word

ness as it unrolls itself in the unwritten story of the heart. From the far beginning of life in its lowest forms all things have slowly moved toward it ; for it is out of the deepest depths of the life of the race that love has risen like a star out of the abysses of the night. In blind unconsciousness life in its lowest forms slowly lifted itself toward that light in which alone it finds the explanation of itself, the justification of its terrible sufferings, the fulfilments of its hopes. Its long career has been a quest of love ; and in love alone does it find that rest which is the fulfilment of its being. Through a thousand centuries it groped and climbed ; it has stumbled and fallen a thousand thousand times ; but out of the earth it emerged at the beginning, and above the earth it has lifted itself a thousand

The Great Adventure

times in response to the indestructible instinct of the divine in it; and now, at last, in the light of clear consciousness, though of very imperfect knowledge, and with other thousands of years of climbing still before it, it lifts its eyes level with its destiny, and knows that in self-surrender it finds itself, and in losing itself for love's sake it finds itself for love's service. For the romance of the first stirring of passion is not a brief joy, a little prelude of song before the dreary prose of toil and care; it is a sudden flash of the beauty which lies in the heart of life, a touching of the keys, brief but sufficient to sound the master motive.

CHAPTER VI

THE MYSTERY OF PERSONALITY

THOSE people who find the mystery in which life is enveloped an obstacle to peace of mind and faith in the ultimate good do not understand that a world bare of mystery would be a world devoid of meaning to the spirit, however it might justify itself to the mind. Order is doubtless one of Heaven's first laws, since Heaven is at the farthest remove from chaos ; but order is only an arrangement of things, a logical sequence of events ; it is not part of the vital force which makes the world a living, moving splendour or apparition of the divine will. There may be as true an order,

The Mystery of Personality

in the series of fossils which fills the cases in the laboratory or museum as in the procession of the flowers through the seasons. The mystery of life lies not in the absence of the lines of order, but in the majestic curves with which those lines sweep beyond our vision into the silence and space which hold the little hour and place of speech we call life in their keeping.

Everything that grows and blooms and bears fruit by any conscious or unconscious process has its roots in mystery and radiates mystery as far as its relations run. The rose on a woman's bosom is a single term in a problem which science has not solved and is not likely to solve. It says much to the eye, but it says more to the imagination; for it is not only a bit of matter miraculously shaped to charm the sense; it is also a symbol

The Great Word

of an invisible order in the universe, a single pregnant word of a sentence that cannot be spoken, because it lies within the keeping of the language of infinity and eternity. On all sides visible and tangible things, touched and used a thousand times, are edged with mystery and keep us in constant touch with poetry. Where there is matter there is spirit ; where there is spirit there is poetry ; and where there is poetry there is mystery.

And nowhere is mystery, the sense of the presence of that which transcends our knowledge, more mysterious than when we look into one another's faces and call one another's names. Those who have lived under the same roof, been warmed in childhood by the same fire, looked up into the same faces for light and leading, are often hopelessly baffled when they

The Mystery of Personality

try to come face to face with one another in some great crisis. Four thousand books and more have been written about Napoleon, but who is daring enough to claim that he has dispelled the final mystery of that marvellous personality? Who knows his neighbour in such a way that motives are always so clear that action can be infallibly indicated in advance? Who knows himself? Among all the sons of men has there been one who has not come face to face, at some sudden turn in the road, with an apparition of himself stranger than the man whom he has just passed for the first time in the street? The interest of life can never be sated, because life will not be really known by the latest generation; it is but a fragment of a larger whole which does not lie within the vision of the most inspired. When Shakespeare

The Great Word

has written his thirty-six plays, he has set in order a few striking impressions and comments; the field of knowledge sweeps out of his sight whichever way he turns. After Balzac has come to the end of his forty-seventh novel, he is at the beginning of his immense endeavour to portray a few types of a single race. We are always waiting for the novel that shall tell the whole truth about life, but we shall wait in vain; that truth does not lie "within the empire of any earthly pencil." We do not know those who walk next us in the journey of life, nor do they know us. Out of mystery we came, in mystery we live, into mystery we vanish at the end; for we are all strangers in the earth as our fathers were before us.

Love is, therefore, a long discovery. When the first rapture kindles the sky

The Mystery of Personality

of youth, the lover thinks he understands, and does not know that one of the joys of loving has its roots in his ignorance. If he understood, the afterglow would be a long fading of the early splendour. He imagines that there will come a day when complete possession will give him his great fortune to the uttermost penny. In his inexperience how can he know that personality never can be surrendered, and that the wealth of love is inexhaustible because it can only be coined for the needs of each day? The capital of love is in its possibilities, not in its achievements; the lover is rich, not in what was given him yesterday, but in what will be given him to-morrow and in the next century. They who travel together on a long journey think more of that which lies before them than of that which lies behind; and

The Great Word

their good fortune is to be found, not in the luggage they take with them, but in the greatness and richness of their opportunity.

In love the place of departure alone is visible; their friends gather and flowers are in the air and joyful words are spoken; but it is the goal that really counts, and the goal is always out of sight. In the seeking of the goal lies not only the exhilaration of strength put forth and vitality expressed, but of an ever-deepening sense of community of fortune, of blending of interests, of a fellowship which is slowly sinking into and gathering to itself the immortal energies and potencies of the spirit; until there comes an hour when, each personality keeping its integrity intact, the two have become one in the full and final unity of their aims and spirit. If it be true that we

The Mystery of Personality

largely make our environment by the expression of our natures, then they who reach the higher stages of love, where thought and deed are one, must enter at last the heaven which was fashioned by the way when they knew it not. Those only who build together finally live together in that house of life which is a revelation of all who abide in it.

The romance of life is always at heart the romance of discovery ; for the lover who persists in the face of locksmiths opens a door which had been shut against him ; and seekers after truth, light, or gold are always widening the field of knowledge and experience. But the lover is the most favoured of all these children of fortune, because his discoveries always add to the store of his happiness. He will always believe that he is on

The Great Word

the verge of the ultimate disclosure, but he will always find another day of search awaiting him. Still pressing on to that complete possession which is the prophetic dream of lovers, he will never completely overtake his happiness, never finally possess his fortune. He is more fortunate than they who are rich in things, for he will spend freely day by day and yet his wealth will always await him :

I

“ Room after room,

I hunt the house through

We inhabit together.

Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find
her —

Next time, herself! — not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch’s perfume!

As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed
anew ;

Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her
feather.

The Mystery of Personality

II

“ Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door ;
I try the fresh fortune —
Range the wide house from the wing to the
centre.
Still the same chance ! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest, — who
cares ?
But 't is twilight, you see, — with such suites
to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to im-
portune ! ”

CHAPTER VII

LOVE AND WORK

IDEALISM as an interpretation of life, a vision of ultimate ends and conditions, has always won to itself the ardent, the poetic, and the high-minded — the great company of seekers after light and love in every generation, who rebel against the hardness and injustice of the world, hate its noise and brutality, its fierce competitions and its stolid indifference to the defeated. Even in the presence of the great purpose which runs through the visible order of things and the society in which men have arranged themselves, and which has come to light, as one of the most

Love and Work

spiritual men of the day has said, just in time to save some of the best men and women from despair, it is hard for the sensitive and aspiring and tender-hearted to bear the sorrows of the world and to sit with a cheerful spirit while so many losses ravage the homes that are dear to them and despoil the best fortunes of men. There are hosts of men and women who go through life with a noble discontent in their hearts, a sense of loneliness and isolation in their souls ; they are homesick for a world in which men help instead of smite, bind up instead of wound, are quick to recognise the good instead of eager to find the evil, stand ready in all crises to rebuild the fallen, are patient of spirit with the weak, love the sinner while they loathe the sin, are kindly in speech because kindly in

The Great Word

thought, are indifferent to external conditions because conditions are the happenings of life while the soul is its great and enduring reality, are bound together in a vast conspiracy to cheer, to aid, to give heart and hope, to make the highways of life bloom with spontaneous kindnesses, and to make the lonely world a warm, hospitable, many-windowed home for all who pass on the journey of life.

If the truth were told, what confessions of solitude, of heartache, of loneliness of spirit, would come like a flood from those whom men count happy because they are intrenched against the blows of disaster by all manner of material possession! "The heart knoweth his own bitterness" is one of the truest and saddest of all the summings up of experience in the Book of Proverbs; and where there

Love and Work

is no bitterness there is always loneliness. In whatever circumstances men are born in this world, they are all born in exile ; and in exile palaces are often as prison-like as hovels.

This is the penalty of immortality ; the price we pay for the birthright of the divine in us. To have the power of creating heaven in the imagination is to bare one's heart to the coldness and hardness of the world ; to see Paradise at a distance is to make the desert in which we are travelling more barren and lonely. As one who loves the sweetness of the open meadow, the solitude of woods, and the cool music of running brooks finds the noise and odour and crowding of the city almost intolerable, so those who carry a vision of heaven in their souls find the unkindness, the tumult, and the hardness of this

The Great Word

present world almost unbearable. They have often fled from it and sought refuge in isolation ; they have made homes for themselves in the vast quiet of the Nile valley, they have built monasteries on almost inaccessible heights, they have buried themselves out of the sight and sound of the world in all manner of lonely refuges. But wherever they have gone they have carried the passionate human heart with them, and even when they have found the peace which sometimes flows out of the heart of silence, they have never found the perfect society, the cloudless day of joy, the redeemed world.

If Idealism were at bottom an explanation of life as it reveals itself within the limits of time, it would often seem the idlest of dreams, the most untenable of philosophies ; but

Love and Work

it is a solution of the great problem only at the end of a world-wide and an almost illimitable process of growth and unfolding ; it is the vision of an ultimate perfection, not a statement of present conditions ; it is, at the heart, a glimpse into the great mystery of education which makes this life not only bearable but marvellously spiritual and hope-inspiring.

The Idealism which lies within every man's reach and is every man's need is surrender to the urgent and passionate desire to give his own spirit the shape and quality of the divine spirit, and to create in himself those traits and that attitude which he yearns to find wrought into the fibre of society ; to be in his own soul that which he wishes all men were. Conditions, whether easy or difficult, are secondary ; the eternal

The Great Word

element of peace and happiness lies in every man's soul, beyond the reach of accident. They who seek heaven must take refuge in their own spirits, not in some solitary place at a distance ; and they must find it, not in more congenial circumstances, but in a freer and nobler putting forth of the best in themselves. The true Idealist is not a dreamer in a world of realities which make his dream incredible, nor is he a refugee escaping from conditions which he cannot bear to a more comfortable place ; he is a man who is patiently and often painfully shaping his life in harmony with an inward purpose ; who is mastering crude materials that he may make the vision in whose light he lives shine before the eyes of men whose sight is less clear than his ; who is doing commonplace things in

Love and Work

a spirit which gives them the beauty of a high purpose, as the great architect redeems the meanness of the uncut stone by the splendour of the structure in which it finds its place.

Men are made happy, not by the things which surround them nor by the things which they take to themselves, but by the noble putting forth of the soul in love and work; the two great activities which are never divorced in the harmonious and balanced life, the two languages in which every true Idealist makes confession of his faith and gives evidence of its reality. For love is the ultimate expression of faith, and without works faith is a vain shadow of reality.

CHAPTER VIII

THE APPEAL OF LOVE

THE seeds are folded in the earth, but they are asleep until the morning comes after the night of winter and the sun thrills them into life. As that splendid herald comes up from the south all things that have the power of motion in them lift themselves in an ecstasy of delight and begin that climbing toward the light which is the very soul of the process of life. At every closed door the summons of the sun is answered by a faint stirring as of a dumb thing in deep slumber; then comes a breaking of the casings which have kept the tiny root of

The Appeal of Love

vitality safe ; then the delicate thrusting of a slender tendril toward the warmth ; then the ascension of the living thing into the upper air, and the consummation of its being in complete unfolding and flowering. If ears were attuned to those soundless sounds which blend in the unheard harmony to which all things move, how entrancing would be the far, delicate, multiplying murmur of the northward journey of the sun, knocking at the unnumbered doors behind which life sleeps in the still earth, and announcing that morning has dawned again out of the fathomless depths of space !

Nothing stirs until it is summoned. Potentialities slumber everywhere awaiting the knock on the door which shall bid them spring to life, stand erect, and go forth to the work of

The Great Word

the day. If the earliest history were recorded, it would register the slow awakening of the body, mind, and heart of the race at the call of the materials and power, the beauty and order, the passion and devotion, of nature and of life. The deepest civilisation has come out of a multitude of responses to the appeal of the world outside of man to the world within him; and his character has been made or unmade by the nature of the appeals to which he has responded. In those ages when the wonder and mystery of life, the vision of the divine always disclosing and withdrawing itself, the vast order drifting into view at times out of clouds and darkness and then vanishing again, have appealed to him most deeply, he gave his heart to religion and peopled the woods and fields

The Appeal of Love

with divinities or built cathedrals in which to house his thought of God. In those ages in which beauty kept company with him in his daily vocations and made her home under his roof in a fellowship which seems incredible in these later days, he carved and painted and built as if the creative spirit had possessed not only his imagination, but the sight of his eyes and the skill of his hands; and in other and later ages, when the processes of nature have bared themselves to his gaze and the forces of nature offered themselves for his service, he has become a magician and annihilated time and space and possessed himself of the ends of the earth.

In all the long years of his unfolding, and the vast range of the voices that have called him to thought and

The Great Word

feeling and action, no voice has had such potency as the voice of love, nor has any other appeal sounded in his soul a note so compelling. He has been called to worship, to speak the language of beauty, to put on the robes of magic, and in his turn wake the sleeping forces of the world; but the one voice in all these activities that has pierced his soul, and made him master artist, magician, and seeker after God, has been the voice of the master passion.

For love is the creative force in life, summoning the soul into earthly being from one knows not what incalculable distance of space; cherishing it while it neither understands itself nor the body which houses it; surrounding it with all manner of influences which appeal to the highest in it; evoking its latent nobleness;

The Appeal of Love

teaching it the great lesson of the noble life, the wisdom to know to what voices to respond and to what to turn a deaf ear. "Follow me," said the divinest of teachers, and they followed him through storms and death to the vision of the great White Rose in Paradise. "Take the throne," cried the witches on the lonely heath, and Macbeth put forth his hand to crime and shame and universal wreck. As the germ of life slowly awakens and shyly climbs to the light, so does the spirit of one who loves answer the call of love and shape itself to all purity and devotion and nobleness in response to that call. In all the world of sound there are no voices so compelling and transforming as those which are never heard, but are always sounding in a man's soul beyond the reach of the tumult

The Great Word

of the world. There is no force which draws so irresistibly as a beautiful human soul revealing itself unconsciously in the intimacy of daily duty and homely work. In such companionship, as Goethe has said of another kind of music, "good thoughts stand before us like free children of God, and cry, 'We are come!'"

Love evokes good thoughts because like seeks like everywhere; it calls them out of the depths of the soul and they rise at its bidding by a divine compulsion. It was said of a gracious woman of the eighteenth century that to love her was a liberal education; not so much by reason of the intelligence that streamed from her mind and heart as by reason of the impulses and motives which she awoke in others; for education

The Appeal of Love

is less a matter of giving than of receiving. The silent appeal of love to justify its faith has held many a man firm when lower things have assailed him ; and the appeal to realise its ideals has lifted many a man to heights which he would have had neither the desire nor the will to climb if he had been compelled to make the journey alone. It is the star shining with steady and lustrous ray at the summit which makes the thorny path the road to strength and peace and knowledge of the things that endure the tide of years.

CHAPTER IX

THE SILENCES OF LOVE

THERE is no more impressive sentence in literature than that which falls from the lips of Hamlet at the tragic end of his doubts and questionings : "The rest is silence." The drama rises act by act to its climax, and culminates in one of those terrible devastations which mark the flood-tide of evil ; then, after the tumult, there falls a stillness more appalling than the rush of deepening sound, and the curtain drops swiftly on the visible stage to rise on that vaster stage where the tragedies which have ravaged the peace of society are resolved in a

The Silences of Love

final act of reconciliation, and the light breaks after the tempest on a world rebuilt in purity. In that sublime moment when a soul comes into the world, its first utterance is a cry which seems to break from out the silence of eternity, and to those who have not lost the sense of the mystery and wonder of things comes like a sound from beyond the boundaries of time and sense. Out of silence life leaps with a sudden cry of pain ; into silence life passes when the little hour of clamouring voices has reached its end. The tumult of a few brief years ; the vain endeavour to speak of the things that are most real ; the unappeased passion to give love a tongue as eloquent as its thoughts ; and — “the rest is silence.”

Language came late in the history of men ; long before there were words

The Great Word

there were passions, affections, deeds. In that earliest time before thought had become orderly or conscious a vast accumulation of impressions, knowledge, experience, was forming in the undeveloped soul of the race. Hunger was at the door, love was under the roof, sorrow sat by the fire, work and danger waited in the forest and field, and death kept its sleepless vigil at the end of every path before men spoke to one another of their common destiny. Before language shaped itself on the lips the terrible facts of life had pierced the heart of the race and made it aware of the terror and greatness of its fate. And when speech began to loosen the tongue and make orderly thought and clear memory possible, the wonder of the world without was matched by the wonder of the world

The Silences of Love

within ; in the heart of man were depths which no plummet of speech could sound, and in his soul intimations and divinations and visions as far beyond the reach of words as the breadth and sweep of the splendour which wraps half the world in fire at sunset are beyond the reach of the painter. Words, like music, painting, sculpture, and architecture, are imperfect attempts to express that which cannot be expressed — the soul of man. All the arts have spoken words so deep and beautiful that they thrill us with the sense of the infinite and move us with the consciousness of the greatness of our fates ; but at their best, in sound or stone or melody or colour, they suggest rather than express the burden of the meaning of life ; they open the soul to a majesty of visible and

The Great Word

invisible things which they are powerless fully to record or reveal.

In all those crises of life which bring us face to face with our mortality the wise are silent; for in those awful moments the impotence of speech is tragically apparent. A pressure of the hand conveying the warmth of love in the sudden chill and the appalling silence is our recognition that we have travelled beyond the realm of speech and have come within the empire of silence. Later, when we have returned to our places and the old duties become blessed ministers of mediation, we speak again. For us, as for our remotest ancestors, life is still so much vaster than language that when its depths are uncovered we stand silent in a presence in which silence is the highest form of prayer.

The Silences of Love

There is a silence of vacuity and emptiness; there is also a silence born of the consciousness that the breaking up of the foundations of a life that is dearer than ours cannot be arrested for the time of the drawing of a breath by any sacrifice of ours.

Language follows experience and waits on it; and when the moments come fraught with the terror and majesty of our fate, language stays without, impotent not only to help but even to enter the sacred place where the spirit stands face to face with the Infinite.

Into the vast accumulation of the joys and sorrows, the births and deaths, of all the past laid up in the heart of the race, the poets are always sinking their wells; and out of those sunless depths fountains are always gushing for the cooling of the fever and the slaking of the thirst of the race; and

The Great Word

each generation stands for judgment by what it adds and what it takes from this fathomless reservoir of life. The great ages pour a flood-tide of vitality into this central fountain and as lavishly drink of it ; the inferior ages live so far from it that they neither increase nor waste it ; they impoverish themselves.

In all the arts which make the one language of the soul, love has spoken passionately, eloquently, with noble breadth of vision and a touch on the keys almost as varied in emphasis as the degrees of sacrifice and surrender of which devotion is capable ; but at the end of all the sweep of speech in image, figure, hyperbole, there comes a sudden consciousness of futility. Lovers without number have spoken, but love remains dumb ; “ the rest is silence.” There have been marvelous visions, divine glimpses, thrilling

The Silences of Love

divinations by the way; but the perfect revelation, the last winged rise of speech to match the greatness of the theme, is not within the reach of any earthly singer. If the various activities of the soul have never yet found complete record, how shall its master passion be compassed with any form of words? As well hope to define God as to define love, which is the holiest of the names he wears.

Not only is this inadequacy of speech apparent in all the great crises of passion, but it is the cross and thorn of the daily life of all that love. The heart aches with the need of expression, but though it speak with tongues of fire the pain remains; it cannot be eased by expression.

For love is the infinite in man, and strives vainly in all the ways and works of the years to break through the

The Great Word

bounds of mortality. Strive as it may in word and deed and caress and service and sacrifice, it never fully discloses itself; burn as it has burned in the far shining of the ultimate grace and splendour of genius, it never yet has sent its unclouded light, its fullness of warmth, into any heart. No song could cool the burning heart of Sappho; no magical ordering of words, cadence melting into cadence in flowing sound, could convey what Shakespeare thought when he fashioned the sonnets; no skill nor fire nor subtlety of experience could reveal what lay in Mrs. Browning's soul when she wrote those lines from his "little Portuguese" which Browning valued more than fame. "Think as a mortal" was a wise maxim of the Greeks, who understood so well not only the resources but the limitations of the

The Silences of Love

arts of expression. We mortals, with this wealth of immortality in our hearts, are always trying to win and spend it by the way ; but, bestow it as prodigally as we may, pouring it out day by day in word and deed, we cannot spend it, and at the end it remains what it was at the beginning—an immortal possession for which there is no room in the brief time we call life and the little place we call the world.

We speak to-day, and to-morrow it is as if we had not spoken and we must begin once more at the beginning ; after the little outpouring of yesterday the fountain has filled again. Thus, forever, the lover is haunted by the feeling that he has not spoken and that everything remains to be said ; for no words of mortal making are deep enough to hold the thoughts and passions that partake of immor-

The Great Word

tality. If the silences of love were not deeper and richer in meaning than its speech, it would utterly fail of adequate expression ; no sentence would ever form on its lips that would compass the full wealth of its thought. But those who share the vision of the divine in human relationship hold in common a vast empire of hope and faith, of knowledge and experience, which is jointly possessed in every part so completely that no word needs to be said about it ; and the hush that falls on those who climb when, at the summit, the view opens to the horizon, often descends on those who see life from the same point, and each knows what lies in the vision of the other. Perhaps the highest office of speech between the fortunate who have found one another is to expand this empire of silence within which all the

The Silences of Love

highest, finest, most spiritual hopes and experiences are safeguarded against the ravages of time and fate. All speech that is worth while passes something into the keeping of that silence in which the soul hides itself inviolate: the greater and deeper the love, the vaster the world that is held in common and the more pregnant and eloquent the silence between two souls who have elected to make the journey together. "Therefore it is," writes Maeterlinck, "that such of us as have loved deeply have learnt many secrets that are unknown to others: for thousands and thousands of things quiver in silence on the lips of true friendship and love that are not to be found in the silence of other lips, to which friendship and love are unknown."

CHAPTER X

DAY UNTO DAY UTTERETH SPEECH

THE silences of love are made significant by its speech ; for, although what it has to utter can never be compassed by words, it must strive, by the compulsion of its passion, to give itself audible expression. Shakespeare failed of complete disclosure of himself because his spirit transcended all bounds of language, not because he did not test every resource of the art in which he worked. That Wagner never gave passion its last and uttermost abandon and ecstasy was due, not to his lack

Day unto Day Uttereth Speech

of endeavour, but to the immensity of the volume of emotion poured into the shallow channels of song. There is, in rare moments, a vibration, a cadence, a thrill, in a human voice which sets the imagination aflame and stirs the spirit in a sudden tumult; but the perfect note is never sounded, the last ravishing chord never struck. If life could make a full and ultimate record in any art or in all the arts, there would be an end to its immortality ; it strives for ever, and for ever fails, to find a voice because its immortal content cannot be contained in mortal forms and shapes. So love, which is the soul of life, craves the full outpouring of its passion, and is for ever baffled :

. . . yet, do not grieve ;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair !

The Great Word

But this divine stillness in which, as in the secrecy of the earth, the most beautiful and imperishable of all the forms of growth goes on, is constantly enriched by the interpretation of speech ; for, being hidden in mystery, it thrives on words and comes to its own only when it is put into some kind of language. Thought must emerge from nebulous meditation and define itself in words before it can become part of any real mental process, and must pass on into some relation with action before it can become incorporate in character ; in like manner, though love precedes speech and may strike deep into the nature without it, yet it cannot reach its farther boundaries nor fertilise the world until it declares itself. The fountain hidden in the breast of the earth may be full, but it cannot bring ver-

Day unto Day Uttereth Speech

ture to the field and set the brightness of flowers in the long stretches of grass unless it pour itself out lavishly. So love, though it be guarded by silence like some divinity in a shrine, must be celebrated with perpetual praise. Each worshipper has his own ritual, his own form of devotion ; but upon all alike is laid the need and to all is given the joy of giving faith a voice and loyalty a form.

The deeper the sense of the inadequacy of words to contain what the spirit would pour into them, the deeper the stress for expression. In a vain endeavour to ease that pain which is part of all great faiths and passions, love uses a few words over and over like a rosary which runs through the fingers long before the need of prayer is appeased or its

The Great Word

rapture spent. But in the fervour of a great passion these well-worn coins of speech are stamped with a new image and superscription. For love is a miracle, and when a miracle is wrought old things are made new :

Say over again, and yet once over again,
That thou dost love me. Though the word
repeated
Should seem “a cuckoo-song,” as thou dost
treat it,
Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green
completed.
Belovéd, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt’s pain
Cry, “Speak once more — thou lovest !” Who
can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall
roll,
Too many flowers, though each shall crown
the year ?

Day unto Day Uttereth Speech

Say thou dost love me, love me, love me —
toll

The silver iterance ! — only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence with thy soul.

In the countless dramas of love, eyes have spoken when lips were dumb, and to those silent souls to whom both forms of speech have been denied there has been that language of service which is, if not the highest, certainly the sincerest, form of expression. To each his own dialect, but for all the need of speech ; for without speech the silence of love is impoverished and becomes at last mere emptiness. There are hosts of those who love who fail in the terrible testing of time and tide because, having once spoken, they rest in a single expression and do not understand that love needs the daily ministry of speech and withers and

The Great Word

perishes without it. If the freshness of the first emotion and the joy of the earliest devotion are to touch the long procession of the days with the romance of the golden hour in which love knows itself and is known, the fire must be rekindled morning and evening, and every hour must have its moment of remembrance. So precious is love, and, like all rare and beautiful things, so susceptible to care or the lack of it, that it must be guarded with perpetual thought and watched with tireless tenderness. It escapes when flowers are no longer at the windows and the hearth is left bare ; and they who would keep this most wonderful gift of God within mortal habitations must honour it with scrupulous care and guard it with that vigilance of courtesy which is the last grace of chivalry.

Day unto Day Uttereth Speech

Beautiful and sensitive as it is, there is nothing so hardy and indestructible as love when it is nourished by daily speech into full strength ; time, that eats the heart out of so much joy and blights so much beauty at the roots, has no power over it ; and death, which waits like a shadow beside every sunlit hour, is but a phantom of the night in its presence. Care and toil and bitter trial neither dismay nor exhaust it ; it holds back from no hardship, evades no rack, flees from no anguish ; it has laughed at locksmiths since the beginning of time. Heroic spirits quail, hearts sink with fear, and strength is over-matched ; but this delicate and fragile spirit from heaven remains when all other possessions are wrecked and survives when all else has perished. And yet it dies when the daily word is

The Great Word

not spoken and the hourly service rendered ! For the supreme passion must hold the supreme place in a man's life ; and when it is uncrowned and dethroned it leaves the place where it was once honoured empty and desolate. And under all God's heavens there is no room so desolate as that from which love has withdrawn its shining presence.

CHAPTER XI

LOVE'S SECOND SIGHT

AMONG the maxims which have their roots in confusion of thought none is more misleading than the ancient and well-worn aphorism that love is blind. The fable of Psyche has been traditionally interpreted as a pathetic instance of that curiosity which opened Pandora's box and let a swarm of evils fly over the world, and which drove Elsa to put the fateful question to Lohengrin at the very moment when her joy was at its consummation. The beautiful story, so weighted with the deeper meaning of things, bears another and higher interpretation; for the soul cannot surrender until it

The Great Word

understands, nor drain the cup of the deepest experience until it sees clearly the figure in whose hands it is held.

If love were blind, life would sink into chaos ; for love is the force that creates, the power that sustains, the principle that governs. It is the love of his art which draws the artist, unwearied by heroic apprenticeship, into the very heart of his art and makes his passion one with insight, skill, the final mastery of the line. If love were blind, those forms in which the visions and ideals that bear with them the fortunes of the race, because they are the symbols of its spiritual insights and achievements, would never have been set in temples and on highways by those who counted no toil too heavy, no sacrifice too great, that celebrated the marriage of love and art. To him

Love's Second Sight

only who loves with a consuming passion the final veil is lifted and the ultimate skill conveyed ; for knowledge and love are one at the heart of things, and art, which is the record of the creative spirit working with and through men, touches perfection only when passion and intelligence are so blended that out of this commingling another word is spoken in the revelation of the divine to the human.

Love is never blind ; those who love are often blind, and to their passion is charged that which belongs to lack of faculty. Love does not open new senses or convey new faculties ; it vivifies, clarifies, intensifies the senses and faculties which already exist. In its first daybreak the world lies half concealed in a mist which poetises rather than distorts or falsifies proportions, relations, qualities ;

The Great Word

when the light grows clear, perspectives are corrected, outlines become distinct, hidden lovelinesses come into view, hidden defects disclose themselves ; not because the light and warmth are less, but because they are greater. To measure the depth of love by its blindness would be to appraise the splendour and fertilising power of the sun by the rays which shine level from the horizon rather than by those which fall upon the soil and search its secret places for every potency of life.

The blindness of love is a measure of its inadequacy, an evidence that it has yet to work its miracle of knowledge as well as of surrender. The mother who sees no fault in her child is blinded, not by her love, but by her dulness of perception ; the wife who finds no defect in her husband may

Love's Second Sight

make him comfortable but cannot make him great; the friend who finds only content in his love for his friend is denied the highest service of friendship; for, as Emerson said, "our friends are those who make us do what we can." The faithful mothers, wives, and friends who accept us as we are as often harm as help us; they live with us only on the lower levels of being; they neither climb nor stir us to climb. Love that is content robs us of the best it has to bestow, and is satisfied with gifts of bread and wine when it might bestow upon us vision, inspiration, character. They love noblest who see clearest, and they bind us with bands of steel who so awaken the best in us that when at last we put forth our hands to grasp the highest things, behold! our hands are clasped in theirs.

The Great Word

The beginning of love is often a brief madness ; the end of love is perfect sanity ; between the dawn and the full day lies the long, gradual illumination. Irony, satire, and cheap cynicism must not make us blind to the beauty of the illusion in which love begins — the illusion of perfection. For love seeks perfection because in perfection alone its possibilities are perfectly realised. There is an hour of prophecy in all noble beginnings. The artist dreams the dream of beauty before he enters on the long path of toil and anguish of spirit which must be travelled to the bitter end before that dream becomes his possession. First in every great career comes an hour of vision ; then years of toil and discipline when the vision seems to have vanished utterly ; then its gradual disclosure in the

Love's Second Sight

work of a lifetime as the work nears its completion and its lines come into view. Ideals are idle dreams unless they are wrought into character by the routine, drudgery, and toil which seem at times to remove them to an inaccessible distance.

Love begins with a vision: it passes through the travail of the years; the disillusion which is part of the waking day; the monotony of daily duty; the wearing away of the flush of the morning, the fading of the earliest bloom; and then, at the end, behold! the vision is there again, no longer lying like a bloom diffused from the sky, but like a loveliness rising from the depths of life. Between the vision and its realisation lies the training in clear sight, the education in full knowledge, which the blind call disillusion but which

The Great Word

the clear-sighted call the divine opportunity of love ; and the realisation of the vision depends, not on the early glow, but on the high, clear, later light. Not to the blind, the indulgent, the slothful lovers come the great realisations of the final growth, but to those whom love has made wise in severity, resolute in demand, heroic in loyalty to the highest in the beloved. Perfection of character, entire harmony of nature, instant adjustment of mood with mood, if they were possible at the beginning, would defeat the highest service and joy of love, which is to see in the imperfect the promise of the perfect as the deep-sighted see in man the image and nature of the divine.

It is the second sight of love which makes it the joy of life as well as its inspiration ; behind the present im-

Love's Second Sight

perfection, which it clearly sees, rises always the image of that beauty which is to be when all the ends of mortal life have been fulfilled. It is to the blind that clear sight seems disillusion; to the open-eyed it is the beginning of the realisation of the vision; it is the first sight which prepares for the second sight. Love can neither offer nor demand perfection; for perfection in this mortal life would be as abnormal, unwelcome, and repellent as a child with the knowledge and experience of a man. It is in the search for perfection that love finds its highest opportunity and its deepening joy; in its vision that the sky above it kindles with a glory which does not fade when the sun sinks to the west, but glows as if an immortal morning were breaking.

CHAPTER XII

THE STEEP ASCENT

THE questionings of Job, face to face with an outworn explanation of the sorrows and afflictions of men, were met, not by a sudden flood of light, but by a swift unveiling of the splendour of the universe. No word came from the depths of space in which Orion and Aldebaran blazed like flaming suns, but on the verge of fathomless mystery and wonder from which he looked into the universe there issued a new consciousness of the impotence of human judgment, a new sense of the greatness of the Infinite. Who are we that we should sit in judgment upon

The Steep Ascent

Him whose minutest work on the leaf of a fern holds a secret which is beyond the keenest search of knowledge? How shall we know what life may hold for us when its curve is so vast that the full space of our years shows no bending of the line? With what wisdom can we call the happenings of the day prosperous or adverse when they may not disclose their meaning or bear their fruits for a full century?

If it were not so tragic, nothing could be more pitiful than our judgments on our fortunes from hour to hour; so narrow is the range of our vision, so dim our sight, so incompetent our faculties for the tasks we lay upon them. Half the judgments passed upon life are false because the judges are incompetent to reach a sound conclusion by reason of lack

The Great Word

of moral sanity, of the ability to get above the mist of temperament, to escape from the tyranny of personal experience and look at things in the large, clearly, dispassionately, with a vision unblurred by moral, mental, or physical disease. The roots of much scepticism and of all cynicism are not in the universe; they are in the nature and life of the sceptic and cynic; and many of those whose interpretations of life have touched the imagination and affected the judgment of their fellows most deeply have been utterly incompetent to speak authoritatively of anything save their own experience. No gift of passionate speech can clothe a man with authority to decide on the great questions of fate when he has made himself incompetent to understand them. The sane man alone has a

The Steep Ascent

right to assume judicial functions in the great court of life ; genius, when it lacks sanity, is only a special pleader in that court.

And of those whose lives and minds are sane how many have the power of detaching themselves from themselves and looking at life as it affects the race? How many have lived deeply and widely enough to touch the hem of the garment of the final and ultimate truth about the life of man in a world which was sown as a seed in the furrows of time a million years ago and in a society which is still in its early stages of development? Surely there is need that the lesson set for Job should be studied by the men and women of to-day, whose first impulse when any pain falls on them is to challenge God, and whose passionate response to any

The Great Word

hardship which comes to them in their relations with society is to tear down and cast aside the ancient order which has slowly and with infinite pain built up the home and set the family in it and made it the shrine of love.

The incredible vulgarity of divorce has its root in the failure to understand what love is or means ; and a thousand travesties of the home make clear the fatal blindness that has fallen on a host of men and women who have mistaken a sudden glow of passion for the supreme passion of the soul, and have set out to find happiness in the gifts of others rather than in the lavish outpouring of their own souls. The shepherd in Virgil, after long search, found Love living among the rocks ; to-day men and women are seeking Love in rich and fallow

The Steep Ascent

places, and, when they find him not, cry out that Love is an illusion of youth, and happiness a mirage of the morning which fades in the heat of the day.

Love hides from self-seekers and thrives best in difficult and lonely places; and they only who seek him with infinite patience and endure hardship with a glad heart for his sake find him. The restless, short-sighted, impatient throng who rush hither and thither in a mad race for happiness, unwilling to bear love's burden, endure its discipline, or wait its ripening, know nothing of its nature, and never, by any chance, overtake its blessedness. And yet these are they who fill the modern world with cries of pain, with acts of lawlessness, with manifold infidelities, with a chorus of cynical denials of love! Out of

The Great Word

the mouths of the ignorant can come only ignorance, as out of the mouths of the unclean can come only uncleanness. It is not Love upon which such as these sit in judgment; it is themselves. Love flies from those who approach with the eager and burning selfishness of mere passion, but stands suddenly beside those who seek not that they be served, but that they may serve. The shy bird happiness, vainly pursued by such a frantic throng of men and women, flies from the self-seeking and makes its home with the self-forgetful; and Love, upon whom it waits and with whom it bears immortal companionship, sits content and smiling by the hearth of those who serve for what they can give, not for what they can get.

It is true, love often begins in a great self-assertion, an outburst of

The Steep Ascent

egotism which knows for the moment only one object, and must possess what it seeks though all the world fall in ruins about it as the world crumbled about Romeo ; but if happiness is to lodge with love, to this fierce passion of egoism there must succeed a noble surrender of self ; for the secret of happiness in love is to pour out the wealth of one's soul and to be brain and heart and hands and feet to another ; to ask little but to give all ; to count one's self rich in what is spent, not in what is saved ; to find the immortal joy by losing it. The depth and volume of the out-going tide measure the rush and force of the returning floods sweeping back to the havens whence they streamed forth. The immortal lovers are not those who have demanded much, but those who have

The Great Word

given all for love's sake, and sorrowed only when there were no more services to be rendered, no more life to be laid down. The light that shines from their poetic and heroic figures streams not from any bliss which sets its candles aflame about their paths, but from the divine fire which kindled and glowed in their spirits.

For many of these there was no home-coming at the end of the day, with windows aglow and that waiting sympathy and fellowship and devotion which make so many doors into quiet homes the gates of Paradise; there was the steep ascent, the lonely vigil, the fierce struggle, the defeat which was but a mask of victory, the triumphant death with the face to the foe. Among the seekers after Love, nevertheless, these surely wear most worthily the fadeless crown.

The Steep Ascent

Love that was born in heaven and came on earth to console, to heal, to inspire, to transport, never yet came for justice to the court where the misguided and blinded go for release from bonds taken without a thought save for their own pleasure. To those alone is the heavenly presence revealed and the heavenly vision set in the sky of daily life who seek Love that they may serve, and who come upon great happiness by the way of great forgetfulness.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CREDIBILITY OF LOVE

“ALL the world loves a lover” not only because he recalls a brief ecstasy in the memory of the multitude who are living in the light of common day, but because he rounds out to its full dimensions the pas-sional and romantic capacity of the race. For a host of men and women life is a tracery, gradually becoming obliterated, of generous passions and great hopes; a fading of the sky of dawn into the dull arch of a grey noon. It is not the blackness in life that brings weariness and repul-sion, it is the monotonous greyness; it is not radical scepticism that blights

The Credibility of Love

faith and takes the bloom off the days — it is indifference, disillusion, cynicism. The root of these destructive forces which rob life of its romance, its wonder, its perennial freshness of interest, is in the man, not in the order of things; and society has always been full of those who, losing the mind and heart of childhood, have not realised the aging of their spirits and have thought the world grown old. Now the lover, wiser than the children of the world, carries the fresh heart and keeps his vision securely among the blind.

“Great men are the true men,” writes Amiel, “the men in whom nature has succeeded. They are not extraordinary, they are in true order. It is the other species of men who are not what they ought to be.”

The Great Word

The story of the rise of men from the stone age has been a long record of discovery — the continual finding of unsuspected wealth and of unused forces in earth and air; and it is quite certain that there are hidden from us to-day, within our reach or the reach of our children, a thousand uses of the chemistry of the soil and air, of which the marvellous divinations of the last two decades have been only dimly prophetic. If this inexhaustible treasury of uses and adaptations, of force and material, were not matched by a kindred capacity in men, there would have been no history of science, and the world would present the ignoble paradox of an incalculable fortune in the keeping of an imbecile. That treasury never opens save at the touch of intelligence, and the rarest things

The Credibility of Love

it guards are accessible only to the insight of genius ; so that the story of discovery is the story of the discoverer ; his growth has been registered in the uncovering of the secrets of the world in which he lives. From the beginning he has been slowly or rapidly bringing out of the depths of his nature great and heroic qualities ; he has, with infinite labour, made a place for himself not only with the work but among the thoughts of God. And he is still in an early stage of his growth ; despite the forebodings of the faint-hearted or the near-sighted, despite the apprehensions of those who do not recognise the multiplying signs that we are in a growing, not in a completed, universe, the future holds more spiritual and subtle gifts in its hands, and men are unfolding more and more

The Great Word

the capacity to receive and use these higher things. In the face of a thousand discouraging outbreaks and downfalls, men are rising in the scale of spiritual living, and there are before the race almost unsuspected possibilities of greatness.

The unimaginative suspect the reality of the conclusions of the man of insight, and in every age the Casandras who have foreseen the approach of fate have been rejected and scorned; but the man of imagination is the only man who really sees the world or knows what it holds for men. Greatness has so far been incredible to small men, and from time to time futile attempts are made to explain genius as a form of disease; as if the early stages of growth could be wholesome, and the supreme stage, the final decisive planting of the feet

The Credibility of Love

on the summit, abnormal! It is in greatness, not in littleness, that nature touches the goal of her endeavour; and great spirits are neither abnormal nor diseased; "they are in true order." This does not involve a new kind of men in the world; it involves a higher development of the men now in possession of the world. It may be suspected that a vast amount of what appears to be mediocrity is in reality undeveloped intelligence and power, and that society needs not so much a wider possession of intellect as a higher energising of the intellect it is very inadequately using.

In like manner there are immense reserves of passion, devotion, chivalry, still to be drawn on; the world is full of men who might be great lovers if they knew that love is an art as

The Great Word

well as an ecstasy. There are as many undeveloped resources of love in the hearts of men as there are undeveloped forces and qualities in the world about and the soul within us. Under the pressure of the tyranny of things, in a critical age which distrusts the reality of great spiritual superiorities and is afraid of great passions, those who might reap the uttermost harvests of love are content with a few sheaves; they look at the glow in the sky of youth as a pathetic promise of a day which never dawned. The ecstasies reported by the great lovers they regard as the poetic or symbolic expressions of imaginative men. To the literal-minded such an experience as that recorded in the "Vita Nuova" has no roots in reality; it is an elaborate and somewhat morbid fic-

The Credibility of Love

tion of a great poet. There are many who accept the authenticity of Romeo's consuming passion but reject utterly the sustained passion transmuted into a great idealism which has its classic examples in Beatrice and Laura. In the preoccupation of pressing affairs, the absorption of vitality in dealing with things, the imagination is undeveloped and becomes atrophied, and the stunted spirit grows sceptical of the reality and uses of poetry; and in like manner the failure to unfold the power of love by the practice of the art of loving makes the maimed spirit incredulous of the ecstasies and adorations of those who are possessed by the genius of passion. Mercutio makes sport of Romeo's intensity of emotion because the great passion has not touched him;

The Great Word

let the faintest breath rest on that gallant nature and the scorn of a world would not count a feather's weight against its splendid devotion. To believe in great thoughts and deeds a man must share in them; to believe in a great passion a man must experience it; for to every man come the things which belong to him by reason of his aims, loves, faith. To the commonplace the commonplace is always present; to those who have vision as well as sight the world grows more wonderful the further they penetrate its mysteries. To the nature that has never known a great passion passing on into a secure and noble devotion the annals of love belong to the literature of fiction; to those who know what love may become in the hearts of the pure and the lives set apart to

The Credibility of Love

its service, they are faint transcriptions of an experience that lies for the most part beyond the bounds of speech.

There is a greatness in love as in mind, a superiority which reveals without explaining itself, a genius which is as real as it is inexplicable. The scepticism of those upon whom this divine grace has never rested, the cynicism of those who have lost the power of love through infidelities to its nature and laws, the indifference of those who work with their hands and are content never to look at the sky over their heads, count as little as do the blind man's doubt of the reality of painting, the deaf man's scepticism of the spell of music, the bad man's denial of virtue. In the art of love, as in all things, life is full of the pathos of the search-

The Great Word

ing saying that "unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

CHAPTER XIV

THE ULTIMATE COMPANIONSHIP

BORN in the kindling of the imagination and sinking its roots deep in those instincts which are the records of the primitive nature and earliest education of men in this world, love rises steadily through desire, passion, possession, to a companionship so intimate and so complete that it includes and draws nourishment from every interest and occupation. This perfect companionship is not always realised even by those who love greatly and wisely ; for it is the latest of the many stages through which this master pas-

The Great Word

sion passes, the ultimate phase in this supreme experience. For love has its appointed ways and degrees of growth, and the most tender and devoted hand cannot pluck at will those ripe fruits which attain perfection only on the westward reaches of life, when the afternoon sun lies warmest and lingers longest. After the passion of youth and the deep-moving tides of maturity there comes, in the fulfilment of the promise of love, a wide, rich, reposeful harmony born in the long years of adjustment, of mutual knowledge, of fellowship in the ways and works of the days as they come with their gifts and depart with hands emptied by those who have recognised the princely possessions borne in humblest guise. As in the later autumn there falls on the world of toil and strife a peace so deep that it

The Ultimate Companionship

seems to sink to the roots of things in the earth, and so wide that all worlds seem to be folded in it — the sudden emergence of the poetry or soul of the fields out of the secret places where life is nourished ; so after the vicissitudes and tumults of the years of action there comes a deep and tranquil happiness in which all things partake, and in partaking catch the light of the spirit which hides within all material forms and shapes.

This complete surrender of personality to personality, in which the self-fulfilment of the Western idealist is accomplished by the self-effacement which the Eastern idealist pursues as the end of the earthly life, is not secured between strong natures without the breaking of bars and the forcing of locks. It is a natural instinct, when one is stricken, to seek silence

The Great Word

and solitude ; and the finest and best are those whose desperate desire, when wounds are deep, is not only to escape from the sight and sound of the world, but to take refuge from those who are nearest and dearest. In the closest of all relations this instinct sometimes asserts itself most powerfully. The garrulous ; the seekers after sympathy — of whom there are many — those who cry out when they are struck, not only find it easy to confide, but to get nourishment for egotism by the very recital of their sorrows. But those whose suffering cuts deeper, who have that higher reverence for themselves which breeds reticence, whose habit it is to bear for others instead of asking others to bear for them, who are so repelled by the corruption of self-pity that they would rather endure torture than be corrupted by it, are driven

The Ultimate Companionship

back upon themselves, and by the very measure of their love are held back from speech. When Brutus was bringing his pure if somewhat narrow spirit to the point of conspiring against

. . . one

That unassailable holds on his rank,
Unshaked of motion,

he kept his own counsel, and held apart from the noble woman who was Cato's daughter, and whom "Lord Brutus took to wife." It was the supreme night of his life, in the long hours of which his fate was as surely accomplished as it was later unfolded to the sight of men at Philippi; terrors and prodigies of sight and sound in the streets of Rome portended doom; but Brutus, in the awful hour of fate, was alone in his orchard. The note of indignant remonstrance which vi-

The Great Word

brates in Portia's passionate assertion of her right to share the last secret of his fate, to drink with him the final cup of experience, rings true to the highest ideal of love that had passed on to perfect companionship :

Am I yourself

But, as it were, in sort or limitation,
To keep with you at meals, comfort your
bed,

And talk to you sometimes? Dwell I but in
the suburbs

Of your good pleasure ? If it be no more,
Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife.

There is but one reply to words of
such self-revealing authority as these,
and Brutus, who is compact of all
nobility, flashes back the answer:

O ye gods,

Render me worthy of this noble wife !

.

The Ultimate Companionship

. . . by and by thy bosom shall partake

The secrets of my heart.

All my engagements I will construe to thee,

All the charactery of my sad brows.

It is the office of love not to spare but to share ; to divide not only the uttermost joy but the ultimate sorrow ; to stand bound by the divinest of ties, not only when bells are rung and the sweetness of flowers is in the air, but when the Great Intruder has passed the door and stands in the room, and mortality waits helpless and dumb on the majestic presence which comes to all, and comes by higher compulsion than human invitation. It is the supreme privilege of love to share not only life but death ; to stand unshattered when the foundations are broken up.

And this perfect companionship, of which Browning grasps the final

The Great Word

glorious vision in the imagery of
"Prospice,"

And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that
rave,

Shall dwindle, shall blend,

Shall change, shall become first a peace out of
pain,

Then a light, then thy breast,

O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee again,

And with God be the rest !

is not gained in a day ; it is the rich and indestructible result of a lifelong habit of keeping the heart bare and the soul open and the conscience in one another's view. They alone climb the last heights of happiness who share the perils and toils of the way as completely as they share its inspirations, its exhilarations, its joys of arching sky and expanding earth. For love is not only tender and delicate and to be cherished with infinite care ; it is

The Ultimate Companionship

also hardy, vigorous, fashioned for all tasks, capable of all resistance; the only immortal possession in a world which is but a symbol of mutability and perishableness. And in its perfection it belongs to those only who keep nothing back, but give their treasures of weakness as well as of strength, their wealth of care and anxiety as well as of peace and joy.

CHAPTER XV

THE PROPHECY OF LOVE

THE beginnings of life are always hidden in mystery ; for there is something divine in all births. At the starting-point of life, as at its finish, there are clouds and darkness. Out of the mystery of infinity and eternity we come, and into the mystery of infinity and eternity we go, and there is neither beginning nor end within the range of our vision. When the light first rests on us, we are already shaped and fashioned ; the mystery of birth has been accomplished ; the mystery of growth remains.

The Prophecy of Love

When the slender blade breaks the soil and lifts its fragile stem to the sun, the protecting darkness, which unfolded its escape from the hardness of the seed and the faint stirring of its first instinctive endeavour toward the light, has vanished. For a little time it lives and thrives and ripens in the open, with the free heavens above it and the searching winds cherishing its sweetness or beating its fibre into strength and comeliness; and then, yielding up its life in the multiplying of lives like its own, it sinks back into the darkness and the earth receives it again into the mystery from which it emerged. And so the tide of beauty and fertility perpetually ebbs and flows from the unseen to the unseen, and the miracle of life hastening to death and death sowing the seeds of

The Great Word

life is wrought under the chill of the wintry stars and the soft splendour of the summer skies.

We, too, have our roots hidden in the soil of life; for us, as for the flower, there is the warm nourishing of the sun and the stern wrestling with the wind, and then comes the silence and the mystery. Like the bird in the legend, we suddenly emerge from the night into the hall where there is the blaze of fire and the glow of lights, and then we vanish again into the refuge of darkness, and nothing remains save a brief memory of delicate or vigorous wings and a song that throbbed for an hour and died into silence. Out of mystery, across a little space of brightness, into mystery: that is the story of earthly life. It is a leaf in a book which we read by the glow of a brief

The Prophecy of Love

candle ; a story of which a single chapter is legible ; a journey of which but one stage is accomplished in our sight ; a drama without a prologue, and the epilogue of which is spoken on a vaster stage.

As the beauty of the tree, in the strength of its symmetry and the knitting together of its structure, in the reach and delicacy of its foliage, in the sweetness of its brief flowering and the richness of its fruitage, has its source and fountain in the hidden beginnings of its life and is but the unfolding of that which lay unrevealed in the secret place of its birth, so the strong and tender and powerful forces of our nature, the capacities for devotion, sacrifice, heroism, the passion for purity and peace, the divine energy of growth, which give the brief record of life here its unspeak-

The Great Word

able pathos and splendour, have their roots far back in the divine world out of which we come and to which we go.

No searching, however ardent and tireless, has laid bare the sources of life ; no accuracy or delicacy of instrument has done more than carry the light a little further back and uncover a little more of the mystery that becomes ever more mysterious. If by searching God cannot be found, neither by searching can the birth of the soul be uncovered. Because we are His children, born of His will, bearing His image, partakers of His thought, educated in His school to enter into His life, no hand will ever be laid on the place where we were born, and the sacredness of our souls will be protected for ever by an impenetrable mystery of light ; for

The Prophecy of Love

there is a privacy of light as well as of darkness, and the glory of the Lord is as baffling to the irreverent eyes that search without love as are the clouds and darkness which surround His throne.

When we come into the light, a thousand prophecies come with us, witnesses of our royal birth and fore-runners of our royal fortunes. There, at the first dawning of our mortality, Love suffers and waits. Before we came Love was; we heard its call, though we have no memory of the hour and the place where it found us. But the call of human love was but a faint, far cry compared with the summoning of the love of the Infinite, whose thoughts we are, whose universe is our home, whose fathomless passion for our likeness to Himself willed our being and prepared the

The Great Word

way for us by planting the passion of love in human souls, as the consummation of experience and the fulfilment of life, and the perpetual witness of His heart toward men. Against the background of the mystery of His being the worlds are but things of yesterday, and Love is as old as He; for He is Love. Before all worlds this divine energy of the soul, for ever seeking its highest good in the good of its mate, its supremest joy in the happiness of its fellow, its perfect growth in the growth of its kin, the fulfilment of itself in the completeness of another, had its birth; and, when the worlds have been resolved back into the elements of which they were formed, it will still be seeking its perfect expression in devotion and service and immortal companionship. Disguised under all

The Prophecy of Love

manner of obscure garbs, rejected and cast out in hours of blindness, compelled to bear company with all uncleanness, touched but never stained by all defilement, Love walks the earth in the image of God and bearing perpetual witness to His unseen presence. As all life comes into visible being at its call, so all life culminates and is fulfilled in its unfolding. All life predicts its coming and all life is the witness of its presence.

CHAPTER XVI

THE INTIMATIONS OF LOVE

ONCE more the tide comes singing up from the great sea which lies beyond the horizon, runs rippling into every cove and estuary and harbour, and sounds the note of summer at the doors of the world. The earliest tracery of the season is so delicate that it shows substance and colour only when one sees it in mass and at a little distance. At the first glance the change from the rigidity and bareness of winter seems an illusion, so intangible is it; a softening of outlines rather than a transformation of structure. The distinctness which brought out the interlacing

The Intimations of Love

branches against the sky with the definiteness of an etching has given place to a softness of tone, a tenderness of colour, which are delicate intimations rather than evidences of the coming of spring. Some morning, not many weeks hence, there will be a sudden riot of colour and perfume, for summer will storm the world in an ecstasy of creative energy; to-day only a subtle change in sky and cloud, a softness diffused through the woods like a glow of poetry on the hard facts of life, make one aware that the door of the sepulchre has opened again and the tomb is empty.

Far more intimately to the imagination than to the eye comes the spring, with its memories of freedom and joy and beauty returning with victorious feet after banishment, dear to men since time began. Older than history

The Great Word

has been the watching and waiting for the song of the dove and the nightingale, for the breath of flowers exhaling from the barren earth. In the earliest times the hearts of lovers beat more passionately with the climbing of the sun toward the zenith, the songs of praise rose with fresh exultation when violets bloomed at the steps of the temples, and the blood of youth ran riot when the first warmth awoke the sleeping woods. There was something more than physical joy in the festivals with which the return of the wandering sun was celebrated in the elder world; the rapture of the body was matched by the ecstasy of the spirit breaking away from the bonds of habit and casting off the fetters of routine. For a few short hours work was laid aside, laws annulled, burdens dis-

The Intimations of Love

carded, duties postponed; soul and body surrendered to the impulse of the moment, and a kind of intoxication of the senses took possession of the world. It was a brief madness not free from excess and folly; but at the heart of the sudden dash for freedom there was a sound instinct which modern life has recognised and made room for in a vast organisation of sport and play.

Half the joy of spring is in the senses and half in the spirit; but the joy of the spirit is deeper and fuller of mystery; for it is to the spirit that the symbolism of the season is made clear. The perfect curve delights the eye, but it brings a deeper delight to imagination; and the heart of the rose brings more to the soul than to the hand that cherishes it. The air of the morning, when bird

The Great Word

notes are rising from every covert and the delicate breathings of the happy earth are almost audible, is full of intimations of a divine world outside the field of vision; everywhere hints and suggestions of the unseen assail the imagination, and the sceptic stands convicted not only of coldness of heart, but of dulness of eye and brain in the presence of a mystery of life which transforms apparently inert matter into ravishing flowers by virtue of a magic which no man can explain but which makes every man's path bloom about his feet. The life within leaps up to the cry of the life without as the heart of man responds to the heart of its fellow after long separation. Instincts that sank deep into the nature in those prehistoric years when our ancestors lived in woods or in the

The Intimations of Love

vast silences of the desert reassert themselves; race memories of forgotten associations with nature rise out of the abyss of being; all the forces of life in passion and emotion and inheritance and undeveloped energy flow together and make us aware that our life, like the life of Nature, is fathomless and inexhaustible.

We are as much and as truly parts of what we call Nature as the trees and the flowers, and the tide of vitality ebbs and flows in us as it ebbs and flows in the world about us. When it ebbs, we seem the accidents or incidents of a vast scheme of things; when it is at the flood, we are masters and creators and our hand is on all materials and the strength of immortality is ours. It is the return of spring in the spirit of

The Great Word

the race that announces another blossoming of art, another fruitage of poetry, another epoch of faith in the highest and holiest; for then the narrow boundaries of the visible world fade into the splendour of the invisible, and all things that perish become tokens and symbols of the imperishable. Then every man becomes a believer, a poet, and a lover; and the barren land bears its harvest of hope and peace and joy, the bread that feeds the spirit.

Of this tide of life which keeps the world abloom, love is the divinest form; for in love and in love alone life fulfils and reveals itself. It comes as life comes in the spring, one knows not how nor whence; sometimes slowly diffusing itself over the surface of things and transforming rigidity and hardness into soft

The Intimations of Love

beauty and an infinite tenderness of colour; sometimes like a great tide, rushing far inland and sweeping everything before it. But whether it steal through the senses or storm through them with the impetuosity of passion, its supreme joy is always for the spirit; and that joy rises out of the sense of immortality which enfolds the lover. The earth becomes fairyland to him; life takes on a nobility which searches him like a shaft of light and makes him aware of all imperfection; and there rises before him a vision of consecration which is the discernment of the immutable and unchangeable in the shiftings and vanishings of time and tide. In the heart of love there is always a sense of immortality; and caresses, tender words, the hourly service through which a great de-

The Great Word

votion penetrates every part of life and makes it sweet and glad, are the few and inadequate forms in which an immortal passion strives vainly to express itself. When such a passion comes, every hour is full of intimations of the fathomless life which rises into consciousness in the soul of man; every touch of beauty is a hint of a loveliness not to be discerned by the eye, but revealed to the imagination; every experience is a door through which the spirit passes on into the fuller possession of a happiness that fills the air of the world with a sweetness whose roots are below the reach of time and change.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ART OF LOVE

IN an age in which the love of beauty in a large part of the world is the possession of a few and the passion of a minority of these few, art is regarded as the antithesis of nature rather than its fulfilment, and the endeavour to master its methods as a retreat into artifice, conventionalities, and the tyranny of the schools, instead of an escape into freedom, possession, and power. Spontaneity, the easy, unconscious overflow of the native force, the creative energy, is set in opposition to the definite, painstaking, sustained endeavour to see with clear vision,

The Great Word

to think with order and precision, to feel deeply but without confusion of ideas, to match the soul with the skill of a trained hand when it strives to speak its thought and give voice to its emotion. Those who have loved beauty in every age have known that art is its natural, inevitable, and flexible language; that without command of this rare and beautiful speech the divinest vision is blurred and the most delicate fancy marred; that the deeper the flow of emotion the more pressing the need of channels to confine and direct it to its true ends; that the larger the thought the more compelling the necessity of commanding the one and only fit word; and the richer the endowment the greater the need of the discipline, training, skill, which make a man master instead of servant of his

The Art of Love

genius. The highest art is always the expression of the deepest and freshest spontaneity, and to the masters of the craft alone are given the ultimate freedom and power.

The very soul of love is spontaneity; it is always and everywhere the overflowing of the heart, the sweep of the deeper currents in a tide that moves under a compulsion as binding as that which bids the sea leave its inlets and coves for a season and sends it thundering back; the complete surrender of self in a great devotion; that sublime forgetfulness of which great souls are capable when the divinest ends of living and the ultimate forms of beauty are revealed to them. Calculation, prudence, economy of sacrifice, taking account of cost, are as far removed from love as is policy from honour; they have

The Great Word

nothing in common. The lover who keeps a reckoning of his gains and losses trades in passion but does not possess it. And love thrives only so long as no records of giving and receiving are kept ; when mathematics comes in at the door, love goes out at the window. The lightest breath of barter blights it ; and from every endeavour to bind it with rules, confine it to seasons, and yoke it with prudence it escapes like a spirit from heaven eluding earthly devices to snare and detain it.

Spontaneous, sensitive, elusive as love is, genius is not more dependent on art ; on submission to the law of service in order to secure the highest bloom of beauty. Itself the inspiration of the noblest art, it comes to perfection only when the ministry to its needs and nature takes on the

The Art of Love

faith, the devotion, the tenderness of art. To love greatly involves the possession of a kind of genius ; and love must be served with infinite loyalty and patience. It is or may be as universal as life ; but, like life, it is more precious than all the ends which it seeks, and more exacting of fidelity and painstaking service than all the arts which it commands. It is so great a possession that the whole race cannot completely control and use it ; it is so rare and beautiful a gift that the most delicate-minded, the most true-hearted, cannot wholly learn its secrets. It may be had for the asking, or rather for the giving ; but, like the sky which covers all men born of women, it cannot be stained or lowered. A thousand profanations of its sanctities, a thousand travesties of its nature, cannot

The Great Word

touch its whiteness; out of the foulest depths it has often risen like a flower to unfold its purity and cast its sweetness where nothing less divine could survive the environing death. And yet love, which is stronger than death, dies if it be not daily nourished and ministered to.

This art is compounded of forgetfulness and of remembrance; the passing of the world of self, the building of the world of devotion. Love is sometimes defined as the most exacting form of egotism. This is true of its counterfeits; those striking imitations which are fashioned by the passions acting apart from the imagination or the soul. It is often true of the earliest beginnings of love; the first stages through which it passes on to its higher reaches, its diviner vision; for all

The Art of Love

real love so blends the passion of the senses with the passion of the spirit that the one is sublimated and the other given body, substance, reality. But, however keen and poignant may be the sense of self in the hours before possession has given full expression to a deep and clamorous emotion, the time comes when the lover begins to forget himself, and in that moment love begins to possess him in its fulness. The way of love as it approaches the fruition of its unfolding is a path of forgetfulness ; no nepenthe has ever breathed on the senses a deeper sleep than a great devotion breathes on all thoughts of self. The story of the great passion is the story of those who have forgotten themselves and become absorbed in others ; not to the extinction but to the fulfil-

The Great Word

ment of personality. When the full music is evoked, the "chord of self" passes out of sight; when the man rises to heroic heights of passion and devotion, he leaves himself behind as he climbs to the summit. In the degree in which we forget ourselves, love thrives; and this faculty comes into full play only as it is trained by continuous and persistent practice. Education in the art of love exacts no greater price than that of forgetting. Here lies half the nobility of love, however; and here, too, is a hint of its immortal service to the spirit. The extinction of the love of self is not only the preparation for love of another, but it is also the greatest step towards securing that quality of character which brings freedom and power. They only who are able to put self out of ac-

The Art of Love

count can face with a high heart the greatest crises and take up with a free spirit the most appalling tasks. For all those who love as the martyrs, heroes, and great spirits have loved truth or country or wife or child, has been appointed that road of forgetfulness which ends in the most absorbing remembrance. A thousand and yet a thousand times the lover must forget in order that his whole soul may go into one great act of remembrance.

But this forgetfulness is not the obliteration of self of which some Eastern mystics dream; it is that fulfilment of self which is the crowning affirmation of life. "Let desire die, that the soul may escape pain and weariness and disillusion," takes on, in the experience of love, a diviner form: "Let desire fulfil

The Great Word

itself, that the soul may enter into life instead of evading it." Not by denial but by surrender to the master passion is attained that insight which is much more a matter of vital experience and of character than of knowledge. The lover who ventures the whole wealth of his nature in some noble passion and loses is richer than he who husbands his soul and by keeping out of the way of disaster keeps also out of the way of the highest fortune. "Blessed are they that lose themselves in possessing another, for they alone hold the cup of happiness to their lips."

The art of love, which begins in a thousand acts of forgetfulness, ends in a thousand acts of remembrance; and the secret of keeping the divine flower which fills the house with its perfume in bloom is continual nour-

The Art of Love

ishing and unwearied care. They love best who remember most; whose forgetfulness of self makes room for the constant and absorbing thought of another; on whose lips those words are always forming which keep love fresh by the expression on which and by which it lives, and whose hands are so swift to serve that they seem like devout thoughts encircling and protecting and cherishing. If a great passion is to flood the channels of daily life with a stream that vivifies and sings and flashes with the light of heaven, it must be fed day by day with countless rivulets of little devotions, minor tendernesses, minute ministries; each a tiny stream, but flowing together in a deep and flooding current from soul to soul.

CHAPTER XVIII

LOVE AND LAW

THE most sublime divination ever made by men is the declaration that God is Love. The audacity of it in a world devastated by sorrow and a society ruled by force is evidence of its truth. Through clouds of ignorance, amid cries of anguish, in the presence of victorious crimes and enthroned and sceptred wrongs, compassed about with apparently overwhelming evidences of moral chaos and spiritual wreck, the genius that is in the soul of the race flashed a sudden light on the very heart of the mystery and found Love seated there, immortal, invincible, omnipo-

Love and Law

tent. Since that heroic word of faith was spoken there have been two thousand years of strife and misery and confusion; society has been shaken again and again by destructive forces and rebuilt only to be wrecked afresh; the old order has passed and the new has come only to become old itself and yield to the pressure of the later need; the world has been lifted for the first time into a light of knowledge of its races and their conditions wellnigh complete; and men are appalled by the work to be done before human conditions are made wholesome and safe.

Through all the confusion without and within, the vision of Love enthroned has never faded from the thought and faith of the spiritually minded. Not only have all other explanations of the universe seemed

The Great Word

incredible, but to reason itself have come great confirmations of the truth of the sublime divination, as through clouds and darkness science has discerned the outlines of an order, not fixed and arbitrary, but vital, ascending, passing on through the passion for self to the passion for others, and predicting the other great truth that love and law are spirit and method in a sublime progression of creative energy.

The apparent antithesis between law and love has not only led to numberless confusions of thought, but is due to a confusion of thought. Law has been set before the mind of the race as austere, inflexible, divinely inexorable; the very structure of the moral order, the very fibre of the moral nature, something so august and sovereign that the gods have

Love and Law

bowed before it; a force behind all forces as the Fates or Norns watched in deep shadow behind Zeus and Odin, and measured their span of life with relentless fingers. Love, on the other hand, has been pictured as a beautiful emotion, a divine impulse, a cherishing tenderness, a yearning over men which forgot their offences in its passion for helping them, but lacking divine rigour of righteousness. Law commanded, but Love persuaded; Law punished, but Love pardoned; Law enforced obedience by terrible penalties, Love stood beside the culprit and bore the penalties with him. Good men of logical mind have not only failed to understand the nature of Love, but have been distrustful of its integrity and doubtful of its power to govern.

There have been a thousand mis-

The Great Word

apprehensions of Love because its lower have been so often mistaken for its higher manifestations. Those who love are often blind, but Love is never blind ; those who love are often weak through ignorance, but Love is open-eyed and strong. The mother who defeats the growth of her child by releasing it from a distasteful discipline is not devoted but ignorant; the father who shields his son from the penalties that might arrest the downward tendency is not tender but cruel. Love neither evades nor conceals, because it seeks only the best, not the easiest or the most comfortable way for one upon whom it lavishes its wealth. Law apprehends the offender if it discovers him, brings him to the bar and punishes him. It sees only the deed and can punish only the doer;

Love and Law

its vision and its power are wholly external. Love discerns what is in the heart, commands the offender to confess the offence which is still undiscovered, because by confession alone can the spirit be set right; forces the sinner whom it loves into the hands of Law, stands beside him in the dock, bears with him the awful words of judgment, and goes with him to the prison which is the only way back to honour and peace. Before Law moved, Love saw the offence and gathered its awful sternness; after Law has forgotten, Love bears the disgrace and carries the badge of shame and endures because it punishes only to save. Law takes the culprit to the cell and locks the door, Love goes into prison and shares the humiliation and misery.

For if Love is the most beautiful

The Great Word

thing in the world, it is also the most terrible ; God is Love because in his presence no evil can live ; to all who are out of right relation with him he is a consuming fire. Hell, whatever form it take, is not the measure of his wrath, but of his passion for purity ; not the process by which he punishes, but by which he purifies. Even if it were only a place of torment he must be in it, for wherever the spirits of men cry out unconsciously in the bitterness of misdirected energy, lost opportunity, infidelity to the highest in them, there he must be ; and where he is, there may be suffering but there cannot be the torment of despair. Law regulates the conduct, but Love cleanses the very springs of being ; Law punishes, but Love compels the rebuilding of the nature. The return to life is

Love and Law

often far more painful than death ; and the power which banishes death imposes the agony of rebirth. Love cannot pause until it has brought out the highest nobility in the spirit to which it gives itself ; cannot rest until it has made final happiness sure by perfect purification :

“ Love is incompatible
With falsehood, — purifies, assimilates
All other passions to itself.”

Because God is Love the universe must finally be cleansed to its outermost edge ; because he loves men, there must come the suffering, denial, punishment which constitute the education of the spirit into freedom and power.

If a man would live at ease, let him beware of Love. If he love a country, it may call him suddenly to hardship and death ; if he love Art,

The Great Word

it will set him heart-breaking lessons of trial and self-surrender; if he love Truth, it will call him to part company with his friend; if he love men, their sorrows will sit by his fire and shadow its brightness; if he love some other soul as the life of his life, he must put his happiness at the hazard of every day's chances of life and death; if he give himself to some great devotion, he must be ready to be searched through and through as by fingers of fire, to be called higher and higher by a voice which takes no heed of obstacles, to live day by day in the presence of an ideal which accepts nothing less perfect than itself.

For Love is a more terrible master than Law, and they who follow must stand ready to strip themselves of all lesser possessions. Dante looked at

Love and Law

the terrors of Hell and heard the groans of Purgatory before he found Beatrice waiting to walk beside him in the ineffable sweetness and peace of Paradise; for the keys of the heavenly place were in the hands of Love.

CHAPTER XIX

THE INFINITE IN THE FINITE

ROBERT Browning, who had the highest good fortune in love, must be counted among its great interpreters. He saw it in its widest relations, in its deepest significance, in its highest reaches of joy and attainment. To him, as to Dante, Shakespeare, and the other masters of life and art, the secret of life lies deeper than the intellect, and has its seat in the soul. Below the action of the mind, consciously directed to ends consciously selected, there lie the deeps of being, out of which rise the great impulses, the master passions, the inspirations and enthusi-

The Infinite in the Finite

asms which give life its colour and movement. There the tides of life rise and fall as they flow from and return to the sea of being upon which all things float in sublime stability; for every life, as Emerson believed, is an inlet into the universal life; and while each man keeps his soul in eternal integrity, he is for ever part of a spiritual unity which is the divine nature of things.

In quiet hours, when what is called inspiration breathes on a human spirit, and that spirit vibrates into a music unheard before, the finite and the infinite blend for a moment, and a fresh wave of life flows into the sphere of mortal striving and seeking. A poet whose genius was of the blithest and wittiest, but who knew, as all poets must, the touch of the mystery and pathos of living,

The Great Word

once said, before a cheerful fire in the freedom of friendly talk, that he knew how he wrote verse, but not how he wrote poetry. Writing poetry, he added, is like wading into the sea. You are chilled and reluctant, and tempted to turn back ; and while you stand hesitating a great wave rolls in from the infinite and bears you out — you know not how nor whither. Far below the plane of conscious thinking and acting these secret passages open out into the vast, mysterious deeps whence life comes and to which life returns. We skirt the shores of these abysses with daring thought, with watching of signs and seasons, of the rising and setting of stars, with long and painful vigils of study ; but how narrow are the limits of our knowledge, and how far off lie the ultimate truths

The Infinite in the Finite

from the heights which we have climbed with painful steps! The wisest of the children of men must still say, with the most ignorant, "Thy sea is so vast and my ship is so small!"

It is this environing mystery that touches the commonest things with poetry and makes each inanimate object a point of departure for the imagination. "All poetry," wrote Ruskin, "is the problem of putting the infinite into the finite." As the boy in his wildest play has sudden intimations of the greatness of the tasks which await him in manhood and the inspiration which is to come with them, and feels his heart leap as if a bugle were sounded from some height in his future, so to the most unimaginative there come at times swift liftings of the veil, stir-

The Great Word

rings of wings in the air, mysterious hints and suggestions of worlds not realised ; while to the imaginative and spiritually minded all paths are haunted by unseen presences, and the solid earth seems but a film behind which moves the vaster reality of which it is part. That larger world lies so near that a child's hand often holds the door ajar for a moment. A shout of recognition, a cry of distress, the sudden breaking of light on a face when the soul is touched, the pressure of a hand, an unexpected glimpse of sky through the trees, the splendour of a star emerging from a cloud, a breath of sweetness from unseen flowers — how many and how various are the things and times that on the instant make us aware of the infinite which fills and enfolds the finite, and in the

The Infinite in the Finite

light of which alone all passions, relations, aims, and actions have their meaning and value ! The final question touching any act, achievement, purpose, or passion is, " How much of the infinite does it contain or suggest ? "

Of this hidden wealth, this veiled splendour, love is the perpetual and convincing witness, bearing its testimony where no records are kept and touching obscurities and forgotten places with the same pathos or beauty which it brings to the highest fortune and the greatest station. It is only heaven that is to be had for the asking, and it is love alone that comes to all who summon it by giving it. For the infinite is always striving to penetrate the finite and possess it, and love waits like a flood of light for the narrowest crevice

The Great Word

through which it may enter. As the heat of the sun in the early summer searches the earth for the least potentiality of life hidden in its bosom and summons it forth to growth and fruition, so love enfolds the spirit of man, softly laying its invisible fingers on every door and window if by any means it may enter and possess the house. It is never a question of the coming of love, it is always a question of opening the door to receive it. It is never a question of the enfolding presence of the infinite about us like an atmosphere which we do not see but without which we instantly perish; it is always and only a question of our capacity to see and to understand. Here lies the dividing line which separates the prophets and poets from those who toil without

The Infinite in the Finite

inspiration and who live without vision; those who know the hardness of the world, but are aware also of the splendour of the universe, from those who toil in the fields and have no glimpse of the horizon.

The prophets and poets are the true realists and masters of life; they only are the competent leaders and builders; other men are the artificers of their designs, the executors of their plans. The statesman always has something of the prophet and poet in him, for statesmanship is always a matter of vision: the grasp of the interests of a great nation in their entirety, and a forecasting of its fortunes in the light of eternal law. The man of scientific genius, who sets vast masses of fact in order and ascends from knowledge to truth, is both prophet and poet; and so is

The Great Word

the great engineer who calculates so nicely that mountain ranges are pierced with unerring accuracy and great bridges are swung in air so harmoniously with the laws of the universe that they respond to the changes of temperature like the strings of a violin.

But the truest of the prophets and the most real of the poets is the lover, who sees the possibilities of growth which are the signs of the infinite and discerns the beauty which is its garment. Love has walked the ways of life in a million forms and worn as many masks; but never yet has it departed without a revelation of its divinity, an exhibition of its power. It came once in the lowliest of guises, bore the heaviest burdens, carried the deepest griefs, was despised through

The Infinite in the Finite

ignorance, and rejected, pierced, nailed, smitten with bitter words and sacrilegious hands, tortured and buried. And, behold, the tomb was empty and an angel stood beside it! Love had passed the gate of death and gone forth again to serve, to cherish, to enlighten, to redeem!

CHAPTER XX

THE EXPECTATION OF LOVE

BURNE-JONES'S "Dawn," a lovely figure, moves through the slumbering town with clashing cymbals, her eyes still veiled with sleep, her form still relaxed ; borne forward, not by her will, but by the wind of the morning breathing life across the world. At every gate in the city, on every highway, in every square, Love waits — silent, watchful, expectant. She may have travelled far, but she has never been borne forward by any force which swept her along as the drowsy Dawn is swept ; she has been drawn on by hopes and

The Expectation of Love

anticipations which rise out of the depths of her own heart. She may have had great happiness, incredible good fortune, by the way ; but her face is set towards the future, and the past is dear to her, not for what it gave, but for what it promised. She has heard many words that set her heart beating, but she is still waiting for the great word that shall convey the ultimate secret of her nature, that shall put her in complete possession of that which is already hers. Many things content, but nothing satisfies her ; she counts her wealth, not with a brooding but with an uplifted face. She hoards nothing ; everything she has is at risk in the great adventure, and the winds of heaven everywhere bear forward or beat back her argosies. She builds no secure places where

The Great Word

she may hide her gains; she puts them into the venture upon which she has staked all her fortune. She may suffer cruelly; her heart may be torn and her hands pierced; but her wealth cannot be taken from her, for it is stored in the secret places of her soul.

However much Life may offer Love, no gift fully compasses her desires, for none is great enough to occupy her soul. When her hands are full, her heart cries out for more and better things; and no sooner have her eyes rested on the treasures which the days have brought her than they are lifted again to the larger gifts which the hands of to-morrow are silently and mysteriously bringing her. With Love there was a beginning, although it seems to her that behind that memorable day

The Expectation of Love

there was a shadowy procession of days always moving toward her from the remotest past; but there is no ending. From the summit of to-day the shining hills of to-morrow are always visible; and though she rests here for the night, her thoughts are always there. She works and strives and suffers and wears the flower of joy in this present hour; but, however intent she may be on service or sacrifice or happiness, there is always a look in her eyes as of something still dreamed of even in the busiest or the darkest hour. So Love travels through life with busy hands and a full heart, but with an eager glance forward; content whatever comes her way, and self-forgetful whatever fortune befalls her, but never satisfied.

This eager expectation, often dis-

The Great Word

appointed but never surrendered, has its roots in the immortality of Love and is the manifestation of her magical power of growth ; she witnesses to another and a diviner order of being. She never sees what she possesses apart from what it must grow to ; she is not blind to its limitations, but she is always aware of what it may become ; and to her prophetic heart what it may be it already is. With Love there is no present ; so eager is she for the best in those to whom she gives herself that she always forestalls them and stands beside them with radiant eyes far down the path on which they are moving with slow and halting steps. Those who hear her words and know her devotion sometimes find them exaggerated and even inexplicable, and go about saying that she is

The Expectation of Love

blind. She sees all that they see, but she sees also what does not lie within their vision, the man that is to be. Love gives herself, not to that which is achieved, but to that which is possible. When others surrender hope, she lights it with fresh sacrifice; when all seems lost, she sits clad with loneliness as with a garment, but with expectation still lighting the darkness of the hour. Because she gives herself to the highest and demands the highest, she believes in the highest. Here is the secret of her healing and lifting power: the silent, steadfast, invincible appeal of her faith. How often has it happened that, when all other appeals went for naught, her appeal reached, roused, and redeemed, for to the weak and untrue that look in her eyes is like the light

The Great Word

of God ; searching, smiling, revealing, purifying.

In all the ways of life, where cheap cynicisms, arid doubts, cowardly maxims of prudence, are accepted as wisdom, this figure alone bears the knowledge of life in her heart. Bitter indeed has been the draught of the cup of evil held to her lips by those whom she has followed with steadfast feet into the lowest hells ; but for her there is no hell save that which cleanses. Beside what men call the lost soul she waits with expectation in her eyes ; for through clouds and darkness she sees her own spirit enthroned and invincible. Pierced, scorned, and rejected, she lifts her eyes, and the vision always meets her expectation. Among the blind, the dumb, the false, she alone sees and knows ; for she alone dis-

The Expectation of Love

cerns the infinite resources of life, she alone has that power of sacrifice which wins against all odds because no man can finally shut the door in its face; she alone is wise because she alone is pure.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HIGHEST SERVICE OF LOVE¹

AFTER all that has been said in so many forms of speech, love remains unexplained and unfathomable; we know its manifestations, its modes of expression, its surrenders and sacrifices, but the heart of it we do not know; if we could penetrate this mystery, we should understand God. The mystery of God, which lies like a luminous cloud about us, would be revealed if it were possible to analyse and probe to the bottom any pure human love.

Wherever love is, there dwells the mystery of God; mysterious because

¹ Reprinted from "Works and Days."

The Highest Service of Love

it is too sacred for the searching of thought alone, and too vast for the capacity of present experience. The touch of the infinite is upon it, and it shares the boundlessness of the infinite; for no time is set for its duration, and no limits for its growth. Age, pain, weariness, sorrow, denial, do not weaken it; and it faces death with sublime indifference.

There is an instinct in the soul of love which knows that it is immortal. There come to it at times the premonitions of eternity; it cries out for infinite capacity and limitless time. No language is adequate to bear the burden of its expression or to reveal the glory of its pure and passionate craving to serve, to give, to surrender, to be and to do for the child, the wife, or the friend to whom it goes out in a silent, unreturning tide. After it

The Great Word

has said everything, it retreats baffled and helpless because it has left everything unsaid. Its constant pain is the burden of unexpressed feeling. Try as it may every form of speech known to men, in its heart of hearts there remains the consciousness that the deepest and truest things have not been said. The heart of man has overflowed in song, in art, in noble devotions of word and deed, but the heart of man is still an unplumbed sea. If love were mortal, it could find a voice sweet enough and of adequate compass to convey that which lies in the depths of its being; but how shall the immortal put on mortality? When the Infinite, twenty centuries ago, put on the finite, and the immortal wore the garments of the mortal, the divine was compelled to hold back the most glorious part

The Highest Service of Love

of its nature because there was no language among men fine enough for its purity or capacious enough for its vastness. Christ was not only the revelation but the veiling of the Father. If love were finite, it would not bear for ever in its heart a deep sense of helplessness; it is ready to give all, do all, save all, but it can give only a cup of water where it would open a fountain, and plead and pray where it would gladly lay down its life. The pain of love is rooted in its immortality.

And as its pain of unexpressed feeling and devotion is rooted in its immortality, so also is its divinest revelation of itself. For the highest service of love is not to console but to inspire, not to comfort but to stimulate. In the wreckage of hopes which sometimes overtakes the strongest

The Great Word

and the best, love alone finds a hearing, and brings that sense of companionship which is the beginning of consolation. Wherever darkness settles, there shines the light of love ; and when the smitten arise out of the prostration of grief, it is the leading of this light which they follow with steps that grow stronger as they struggle on. The sorrow of the world has always sought the heart of love as its only place of hope.

But love has a higher ministry ; its glory is not in service in hours of disaster, but in its noble compulsion to do and to seek the best. 'He loves best who demands and secures the highest from the loved one. The mother loves her child most divinely, not when she surrounds him with comfort and anticipates his wants, but when she resolutely holds him to

The Highest Service of Love

the highest standards and is content with nothing less than his best. The immortality of love shines in a home, not when blindness shuts the eyes of the mother and wife, but when the clear-sightedness of her love reveals itself in the greatness of her demands and expectations. It is a fable that love is blind: passion is often blind, but love never. They who love are sometimes blind to the faults of those for whom they care, but not because they love them. When love has its way, it grows more clear-sighted as it becomes deeper and purer. Happy is the child to whom the love of a mother is a noble stimulus, and fortunate the man whose wife stands not for his self-satisfaction but for his aspiration, — a visible witness to the reality of his ideal, and unflinchingly loyal not only to him but to it.

The Great Word

For love, being immortal, cannot rest in anything less than the immortal in another ; it craves perfection because perfection is the sign of imperishableness ; men gather up and carry the perfect things from century to century because these beautiful finalities of character, of speech, of art, of action, confirm its hope of immortality. He who truly loves is irreconcilable to faults in one whom he loves ; they blur the vision which always lies in his soul, and in the beauty of which his heart finds undying freshness of devotion and joy of anticipation.

The wisdom of love, which is wise in exact proportion to its depth and self-realisation, is shown in its exactions rather than in its indulgences. The ministry of consolation is divinely appointed, and love knows

The Highest Service of Love

all its potencies ; but love also knows that nothing is ever really lost in this world except opportunity ; all other losses, however bitter, are for the moment. With this wisdom in its heart, love knows that it saves most when it saves life for those whom it loves ; for life is not simple existence ; it is growth, and the things which come with growth. He loves me most who helps me to do and to be the best and the greatest in any human relation, not he who says the most comforting things to me when death has interrupted that relation. That fellowship, if it was true, will survive the touch of death ; but if I have missed the heart of it by accepting something less than the best it had to offer, who shall call back the vanished years and restore the lost opportunity ? I part from my friends,

The Great Word

but I do not lose them ; what I lose is the growth, the unfolding, the task, the vision, the chance of love in this present hour.

“Send some one, Lord, to love the best that is in me, and to accept nothing less from me ; to touch me with the searching tenderness of the passion for the ideal ; to demand everything from me for my own sake ; to give me so much that I cannot think of myself, and to ask so much that I can keep nothing back ; to console me by making me strong before sorrow comes ; to help me so to live that, while I part with many things by the way, I lose nothing of the gift of life.”

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